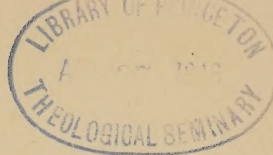


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So many pathways

SO MANY PATHWAYS



SO MANY PATHWAYS

By ANNIE B. KERR

Author of *Wednesdays*, *Candles in the Heart*,
So Gracious Is the Time

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To M. A.

whose life has been devoted to helping
others find the pathway that
leads to God.

*So many pathways lead to God—
The Israelite whose feet have trod
Across the world from sea to sea;
The Arab wheeling on the plain;
The Christian kneeling in the fane;
Each one of these, like you and me,
Is searching for the Deity.
He is the meaning and the end
To which the devious pathways tend;
He is the secret, He the goal
Of all the journeys of the soul.*

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

FOREWORD

IN ALL AGES of the world's history, persecution of those of one faith by those of another has been a usual and accepted fact. But from its beginning the United States has stood for the right of every human being to worship God as he sees fit.

One of the main reasons for emigration to this country was the desire of persecuted peoples for freedom of worship. It is only in the last decade, however, that the enrichment of American life by these many and varied religious groups has been recognized. Recently we have gone a step further, and Protestant, Catholic and Jewish groups are seeking greater understanding and closer cooperation.

While this is true of religious bodies, how many of us as individuals have entered into the spiritual experience of other individuals who differ from us in background and religious affiliation? The majority of us agree that "many pathways lead to God," but few of us care to go along, even for a little way, on a pathway different

from the one we have always trod. Until now the pathways have led us apart. In these incredible times the effort toward cooperation is beginning to bear fruit, and no member of church or synagogue can longer afford to stand aloof if he possesses any real desire for brotherhood or world peace. For how can peace be found among the nations until each one of us as an individual passes beyond tolerance to deepened understanding of diverse beliefs and cultures?

We are all searchers for truth. But who among us is wise enough or great enough to give the final answer to the question, What is truth? May it not be that there are so many aspects of truth that no human being could grasp them all, even were he given the complete and final answer to his question?

A study of the spread of Christianity during the early centuries reveals to us how really *one* were those old churches of the East and West. The causes of separation, which led to such bitter persecution and suffering, were the outgrowth of differences in theological interpretations which have less and less meaning for most of us in this country today. Enough for us that one perfect Life was lived in that small country which is the bridge between the East and the West, and that those who strive to follow in the way He pointed out shall through Him find Life, and find it abundantly.

In the membership of the Young Women's Christian Association all churches and faiths described in this book are represented. Therefore these stories endeavor to present some of the religious festivals that are of vital importance to so many of our newer—as well as older—Americans. It has been my privilege to participate in all the festivals about which I have written. Others have been omitted only because of lack of opportunity to know them at first hand.

Because it expresses so beautifully what I have tried to portray, I quote from an article by the Reverend Thomas J. Lacey of the Church of the Redeemer, Brooklyn, N. Y.

"Although ritual plays some part in all religion, the Anglo-Saxon is by temperament less inclined to external ceremonial expression. New England Puritanism has left an impress on many communities. Its interpretation of religion was stern, cold, rigorous, gloomy. It looked askance at art, architecture, music and gayety. Christmas celebrations seemed vain superstition and the Maypole dance on the common was under ban. Only gradually has our religious life emancipated itself from Puritan traditions.

"By reason of our natural reserve we have not always been able to enter into sympathy with the viewpoint of the groups from other countries, and in consequence we have not understood them nor appraised aright their really precious contribution. We have been tempted at times to disparage or discount their religious culture. We need to review our attitude. We are coming to see that if we are to be helpful in a religious way to these people we must provide the esthetic expression of faith which their souls crave. Between our practical matter-of-fact temperament and the more emotional temper of the Southern European there is a great gulf fixed and we older Americans must develop a sense of the worth of religious experience and customs other than our own. The Anglo-Saxon is restrained and reticent, blunt even in his religious expression. The Southern peoples are buoyant, imaginative, and give voice to their emotion under symbols and images. Their religious expression demands painting, architecture, sculpture and rich ceremonial. Among them the dramatic instinct is more highly developed than with us. Church observances play a large role among Latin, Greek, Slav and Syrian immigrants. They come with a heritage of religious

mysticism and romanticism. Religion permeates every phase of their life and enters intimately into the daily routine.

"The religious worship of oriental Christendom is replete with symbolism—gorgeous colors, lights, incense, solemn processions, opening and closing of the doors of the *iconostasis*, holding aloft the book of the gospel. The liturgy is a dramatic setting forth of religious truth. The priest pierces the altar bread with the holy spear to symbolize Him who was led as a sheep to the slaughter. The star-shaped cover is placed over the sacred bread to recall the star that came and stood over the place where the young child lay. The fanning of the eucharistic elements symbolizes the breath of the Holy Spirit. The fervor of the saints is suggested by the warm water poured into the chalice. The sanctuary is separated from the nave by the *iconostasis* after the manner of the veil of the Jewish temple, which screened the Holy of Holies. The churches are adorned with sacred pictures, *icons*, which are regarded with the affectionate veneration that gathers around a family portrait.

"Even the older Protestant communities have retained a considerable amount of ceremonial, and within the past decade all religious bodies have advanced along the line of a more ornate and elaborate public worship. Ritual is not the monopoly of any one denomination."

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the following persons who have helped me to secure information regarding these festivals, have enabled me to participate in them, and, in many cases, have edited the manuscript:

Father Nicholas Araktinge of the Syrian Church of the Virgin Mary, Brooklyn, N. Y., Miss Bahia Hajjar of the Brooklyn International Institute and Miss Mary Saccal; Mr. Artin K. Shalian,

FOREWORD

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My thanks also go to Rabbi D. A. Jessurun Cardozo of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, New York City, who loaned books on Jewish history and festivals from the synagogue library; to Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Kramer, who welcomed me as a guest at the celebration of the Passover in their home; to the Reverend Thomas J. Lacey of the Church of the Redeemer, Brooklyn, N. Y., who knows and loves the foreign-born and has encouraged me in my efforts to describe their festivals; to Dr. George A. Buttrick, pastor of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City, who read and approved the manuscript and to Miss Lucy Bartlett of the Womans Press, who has been unfailing in helpful suggestions and sympathetic understanding.

ANNIE B. KERR

New York City
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SO MANY PATHWAYS

ARAXIE DECIDES



"OH, FATHER, I wish I weren't Armenian and I wish we had some money and I wish —"

Araxie's voice trailed off into silence at the look on her father's face.

It was a hot day in the middle of September, and Araxie, coming home from school, had met her father at the entrance of the house where they lived. His back was bowed beneath a heavy load of Oriental rugs and Araxie's companions had looked at him curiously and then hurried on with a very casual "good-bye."

They had climbed the stairs together, but not until they reached their own rooms did Araxie yield to the mortification and resentment that she was feeling.

Her father dropped his heavy load and mopped the sweat and grime from his face. "We all wish we had more money," he said wistfully, "but why do you wish you were not an Armenian, Araxie?" He sat down heavily and removed the shoes from his

aching feet.

Araxie threw her school books on the table and pushed back the moist curls from her hot face. "Because I look like a foreigner and not like the American girls at school. And because I have such a funny name and because I have to go to the Armenian church with grandmother, and because —" She stopped abruptly. She could not bring herself to say that she was ashamed of a father who carried rugs on his back, and a grandmother who mended them.

But her father guessed what was in her mind. "Araxie," he said, "when you are older you will realize, I hope, that it is not work that degrades. At least we have not had to eat the bread of charity. Let us be thankful that in these hard times there are still people who want their rugs mended and that your grandmother has the skill to mend them. As for the church, is it not enough that you go every Sunday to the Presbyterian Sunday school?"

Araxie tiptoed over to the bedroom door. She closed it softly and came back to her father. "Grandmother's asleep," she said. "I have something to tell you. I am going to unite with the Presbyterian church, and not go any more to the Armenian church. After all, I am an American."

He did not answer her at once. Then, "I do not object to your joining the Protestant church, Araxie. I understand your reason for wishing to be in the church to which your young friends belong. But your grandmother would feel it keenly. Cannot you wait a little longer before you decide?"

"No—because I *have* decided. Why should grandmother always be thought of first? Because of her we must do this and that, eat Armenian food and —"

Her father put out a restraining hand. "I have never heard you talk like this. It is not like you. You know what a wonderful woman

your grandmother is, and what suffering she endured in Armenia. You know that she has worked day and night since I lost my job, to pay the rent and provide the food. You know what her church means to her. What is it that makes you talk like this?"

But Araxie would not tell him. She only answered stubbornly, "Well—anyway I'm going into the Presbyterian church—now. *You* can explain it to grandmother, and say you are willing I should."

But he shook his head. "That I cannot do, Araxie. If you insist upon taking this step, you must tell her yourself. But it is not right, the way you feel. You forget that America is made up of people from every country in the world. You should be proud to be an Armenian, even as you are proud to be an American."

"Why—what has Armenia ever done to be proud of?"

He answered her passionately. "Armenia has produced a people who have endured in the midst of terrible suffering and persecution. Who have brought to this country high standards, patriotism, purity of family life, skilled craftsmanship, and the oldest state church in the world. You cannot separate Armenia from her church, Araxie."

"Oh, yes, I know! 'The Armenian church is Armenia,' " she quoted glibly. "Grandmother is always saying that."

Her father went to his desk and took out a paper which he handed to her.

"I want you to read this carefully, not because I do not wish you to be a real American, nor because I do not want you—*sometime*—to join the Protestant church. But because I want you to know what one who is *not* an Armenian has written about the church into which you were born."

Araxie opened the paper and glanced at its contents. Then impulsively she put her arm around his neck. "Poor old Daddy," she said,

"it's hard for you to have to decide between Grandmother Siranoosh and me, isn't it? You love the old Armenian church and yet you sent me to the Presbyterian Sunday school—why?"

"It was nearer, for one thing. But there are many Armenians who are Protestants, as you know. We never forget what the missionaries did for us on the other side. I might have gone to the Presbyterian church myself had I not wanted to give your grandmother as much happiness as possible. Now I am too old to change, even did I wish to do so."

Araxie curled up on the divan with its old Oriental cover, and began obediently to read.

"The Armenian Apostolic Church has been the state church of Armenia from the early days of the Christian era. It is national in the sense that to the present day this church has been the living symbol of all that the nation stood for and died for. Bereft of statehood, the Armenians gave their loyalty to the church. The church kept alive the flicker of national sentiment, took the old pagan festivals and reclothed them in Christian form, and adopted a liturgy unrivaled for purity. Symbolism, pageantry and color indicate an Oriental setting, but behind its ornate ritual can be seen the simplicity of the early Christian faith.

"Saint Gregory the Illuminator, an Armenian priest, established Christianity as the state religion of Armenia in 305 A.D., in the city of Etchmiadzin. In 451 A.D. the Armenians were victorious over the Persians, thus saving Christianity from Zoroastrianism. Two years before, in 449, the Armenians had sent the following ultimatum to the Persians: 'From our faith no one can separate us—neither angels, nor man, nor sword, nor fire, nor any other power. All our possessions are in your hands and our bodies are at your disposal. You can do with us as you please. If you leave us free in

this faith, we shall bow to no other sovereign in your place, but we shall recognize no other Lord in Heaven except Jesus Christ, who is the only God. But if after so much submission you demand more of us, behold we are ready; from you, torture; from us, submission. To your sword our necks we offer. We are not any better than our fathers, who for their faith gave their all.'

"It is impossible to think of the Armenian nation without thinking of her church. On every phase of the Armenian life, political, educational, social, the church has placed her imprint. All Armenian art and literature are due to the church.

"The Armenian has sacrificed more than any other nation for the common privileges of protecting the individuality of his race, language and literature. It is to secure to himself the possession of these blessings as well as because of his religious convictions that he has sought refuge in the bosom of his national church."

The paper dropped from Araxie's hand and she leaned drowsily against the back of the divan. Her father was sound asleep in his big chair. Waves of heat swept over them from the open window.

Etchmiadzin in Armenia, and Persia—they sound like a trip on the Magic Carpet, she thought, letting her mind drift away from church problems and decisions to the old rug in her grandmother's bedroom. Long ago it had been a bridal rug, then it had adorned the home of Grandmother Siranoosh in faraway Armenia. It had been the one thing saved from that home when her grandmother had fled for her life during the war; it had kept her warm in her mountain refuge until missionaries had found her and sent her to her son in America. It was called the Magic Carpet because, as far back as she could remember, Araxie and her father had traveled on it in imagination to all the countries of the world. Although she considered herself too old now to play such childish games, she still

loved the old rug for its soft colors and its beautiful pattern.

Her thoughts had wandered so far away that it was hard to bring them back to the Armenian church and how best she could tell her grandmother that she was leaving it forever. Of course she could still attend the special festivals—Christmas, Epiphany on January 6, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Easter—for though they were also observed in the Protestant church, the dates were different. Did the Presbyterians also observe the Transfiguration, Assumption of the Virgin, Ascension Day? She wasn't sure. As to the many national holidays, she just couldn't keep up with them all.

After supper her father went out once more, with a load of mended rugs, and Araxie sat with Grandmother Siranoosh at the open window of the living room. She tried to think of the best way to announce her decision to her grandmother. She must talk to her in Armenian, for the old lady always pretended that she understood no English. When Araxie forgot sometimes and began to talk English, Grandmother Siranoosh would smile mysteriously and answer by quoting some old Armenian proverb, such as, "Speak little and you will hear much," or "God understands the dumb," or "No other day can equal the one that is past."

Tonight grandmother herself began the conversation and, as usual, with a proverb. "The wound of a dagger heals, but that of the tongue never.' Did I hear you speak harshly to your father, when you came home from school?"

Araxie blushed and answered evasively. "It's so hot, grandmother. I haven't been able to think straight today, or to speak straight either."

"Yes," her grandmother agreed. "A hot day—but a great day also—September fourteenth. Do you know what day it is?"

"Some Armenian holiday, I suppose," Araxie replied a little

impatiently. "I know it's not Saint Gregory's Day, nor Etchmiadzin, for they come in June. Nor Saint Vartan's day, nor—oh, *you* tell *me*, grandmother."

"It is Saint Helena's Day—Holy Cross Day—how is it you have forgotten, Araxie?"

"Oh, grandmother, I don't care about these old Armenian Saints' days! I'm interested in American holidays—Memorial Day, and Fourth of July, and Thanksgiving. We've been dramatizing these holidays in school. They are really historical, you know, and we are learning about how they all started."

"'What the great say, the humble hear,' " quoted Grandmother Siranoosh. "But I shall recount to my learned granddaughter the story of the finding of the Holy Cross."

"Very well." Araxie settled back resignedly and her grandmother continued.

"Long, long ago, the lovely Queen Helena made a journey to Jerusalem to save the Holy Places from being destroyed by the heathen. She was very old—eighty years old—and she wanted to find the cross of Christ before she died. So she went to the Holy Sepulchre and found that there had been earth heaped all about it. She got some men to dig away the earth, and there, hidden in a ditch by the Jews and covered with stones, were three crosses. But how could she tell which was the true cross, for they were all alike? Well, she heard of a woman who was dying and so she had the crosses, one after the other, carried to her bedside. And the last cross cured the dying woman, so of course that was the true cross. And the great Queen Helena built a church there over the Holy Sepulchre—and a church in Bethlehem she built and many other churches, but in the one in Jerusalem she put a piece of the cross, in a silver box, and the rest of the cross she sent to her son, the

great Emperor Constantine and ——”

“Constantine?” Araxie sat up straight and regarded her grandmother with amazement. “Why, just last week we were studying about him in history class. He was the first Roman emperor who became a Christian. Why, I know all about him, grandmother. He was marching against one of his enemies, Maxentius, and suddenly he saw in the sky a great cross and on it the words, ‘By this conquer,’ and he conquered his enemy and became a Christian and that was in 300 something. And then Christ appeared to him in a dream and told him to make a standard with the cross on it to carry into battle. And then Christianity became the religion of the state, and a new capital was made—not Rome but Constantinople. Why, grandmother, that’s all in my history book!”

Araxie extracted the book from the pile on the table and began to turn the pages excitedly.

“Well—I’m glad to know that they teach you about our church in your school,” said Grandmother Siranoosh.

“But this isn’t about our church, it’s just plain history. ‘And Constantinople became the sole master of the Roman Empire and remained so till 1453 when the Turks conquered the city.’ But I don’t see a thing about Queen Helena.”

“Well, your history book was written by a man, no doubt, and he wouldn’t care about the mother of the great emperor. But *I* can tell you that she sent the remainder of the cross to her son in Constantinople and he had it enclosed in a statue of himself. And then she went there to live with him, and there she died and was buried, and so the church remembers the day when the great Queen Helena, mother of Constantine, found the true cross.”

“I don’t believe the Presbyterian church celebrates this day,” pondered Araxie.

"No, probably not. It is a good church, Araxie, but we cannot expect it to remember all the things connected with the early days of Christianity. *Our* church was founded by the holy apostles themselves. And then our Saint Gregory made it the state church. That was in the time of Constantine, so of course we remember Saint Helena and the finding of the cross. When we go to church next Sunday, perhaps the ceremony of burying the cross under evergreen branches will have more meaning for you. And you will care more about the little twig of evergreen that you bring home with you. Then you will remember that you were born into the oldest church in the world."

"Yes, grandmother," answered Araxie meekly. She had other plans for next Sunday, but she wouldn't mention them just now. She sat on alone by the window after Grandmother Siranoosh had gone to bed, thinking of all they had talked about. She thought of her grandmother, old and tired and toilworn, living in the past, but at present the breadwinner of the family. Of her father, an acknowledged authority on Oriental rugs, deprived of his position since his firm had failed, carrying heavy loads uncomplainingly and trying to be a true son to his mother and an understanding father to his motherless daughter. She tried *not* to think about herself—it was not a pleasing subject just now, but somehow her thoughts seemed to be out of control. The stars came out and she fixed her thoughts on them. So far away, so mysterious, so beautiful.

She heard her father's tired footsteps at last and ran to get him a cooling drink.

"Daddy," she said, "grandmother and I have been talking and I've decided to wait and not join the Protestant church until she is willing to have me. And I'm going to church with you next Sunday. It's Holy Cross Day, you know."

"Why, our old Araxie has come home again!" Her father drew her down into the chair beside him. "I thought she would."

She slipped from his encircling arm and ran into her grandmother's room. She looked down at the sleeping face, then dropped suddenly to her knees on the precious old Magic Carpet, and prayed an ancient Armenian prayer which Grandmother Siranoosh had taught her.

"O Lord Christ, guardian of all, let your right hand protect me by night and by day, in the home and traveling on the road; in my sleep and in my wakeful hours. Do not let me deviate from the right path. Have mercy upon all thy creatures and upon my many transgressions. Amen."

AT THE FEAST OF SAN GENNARO



YES, it would be just like *la bella Napoli*—the lights, the booths, the gay decorations and, of course, most of all the famous statue of San Gennaro himself.

So Mrs. Tarelli explained to her small son Carlo, who had been in the hospital a year ago, and had therefore missed all the excitement. Just across the street from their flat, the special shrine had been erected where, under his gay canopy, the saint would live for four days and nights.

Mrs. Tarelli held small Carlo very tight, lest he fall off the fire-escape into the street below, and continued her explanation..

Naturally there was no beautiful bay in the background, with Vesuvius sending clouds of smoke into the blue sky. But there would be pictures of Vesuvius carried through the streets, red lava pouring down its sides, for San Gennaro had kept the red-hot stream from reaching *la bella Napoli* on several occasions. He was the patron saint of that city where long, long ago he had been a

good and wise Bishop. Then wicked men had cut off his head and the sorrowing Neapolitans had buried him in a great church, and ever since then he had performed miracles for his faithful people. Every year on the nineteenth of September and the days that followed, there was a big *festa* on Mulberry Street, just like the one in Napoli. And surely, with the saintly Bishop just across the street, some especially good fortune was bound to come to the Tarelli family. Tonight the crowds would gather—with music and marching. And tomorrow night would be the best of all, because it was Saturday. In the meantime there was much to be done and Carlo was to stay home from school and help his mother.

A little white dog wriggled through the window and onto the fire-escape. Mrs. Tarelli caught him up roughly and thrust him into Carlo's arms. Then she climbed laboriously into the living room, pulling boy and dog after her.

"Taka heem to store and tie-a heem tight where he don't can get out," she ordered.

Carlo held the little dog close and proceeded to the store, now in charge of his older brothers during the festival because his mother would be more than busy in her booth on the curb. Spotty, dearest pal, understanding comrade, closest companion, howled dismally when Carlo left him alone in the back of the store. He was small and white, with one black ear and four black paws and he returned Carlo's devotion with all the fervor of an eager and loving heart.

Mrs. Tarelli, owner of the store since her husband's death, large, good-natured and very capable, sent Carlo hither and yon on various and sundry errands, while she herself arranged the booth, stacked up huge quantities of bread and rolls, laid out sausages in neat rows, chopped up meat and peppers and garlic into a savory

sandwich filling, and blew the lumps of charcoal into a flame.

Carmela, aged sixteen, was supposed to assist her mother. But Carmela wasn't much good at hard work, Carlo decided with seven-year-old masculine superiority. Yet when she tossed her thick curls and snapped her black eyes, the young men came flocking around her like flies to a honey-pot.

All up and down the street the booths were being prepared for the crowds who would soon be arriving, hungry and with plenty of coins and bills long saved for just this occasion. It was a time for the selling of much food and driving smart bargains, as every merchant in Little Italy knew, as well as for the collecting of funds for the church and the Red Cross and the Italian hospital.

It was almost noon when Carlo slipped away from the hubbub with a big sausage for his best friend. But Spotty was not in the back of the store where he had been left. No one knew where he was, no one had seen him. "Good riddance to bad rubbish," his brothers said, laughing at his distress. Mother Tarelli was more reassuring: "Spotty ain't lost. He just taka leetla walk. He come back soon. Here, you taka dis." She thrust a hot sandwich into his hand.

But Spotty didn't come back. All afternoon and evening Carlo watched for him. Sometimes, as the crowds and excitement increased, he would forget that his little friend was missing. Then—suddenly—he would remember, and looking across at the mitred head of the good Bishop, which was all he could see, he would pray fervently, "Please send Spotty home. Please, good San Gennaro, send Spotty home."

Darkness came, and the lights. Across the street they hung in great curves, a shining archway, up and down, as far as one could see. And around the statue they twinkled and shone, red and

white and green, like jewels in a crown. Lights! Lights everywhere. They lit up the booths, festooned with paper and red peppers, strings of chestnuts and hazel nuts, dolls, horns, holy pictures. They shone on the rapt faces of the people, hanging out of windows, clinging to fire-escapes, sitting in the doorways of their shops, teetering on frail boxes and chairs. They blinded the crowds surging up and down the sidewalks and street, packed so closely that even the policemen couldn't get through. Hungry crowds, clamoring for food. Hot food, rich food, cold food and drink. Sandwiches, hot dogs. Food fried over charcoal, on oil stoves, in deep fat. Clams, snails, olives, cheese, spumoni, ice-cream cones, tortoni, pastry, candy.

The noise was deafening. Bands played, bugles sounded, choral societies sang, children shouted. And from his throne amid the blazing lights, the Bishop-Saint looked down on the gay, laughing throng and on a sorrowing little boy searching for a lost dog.

It was near midnight when Carlo went home alone and put himself to bed on the couch in the living room. His mother was so busy she seemed to have forgotten his very existence; his constant companion had disappeared; he had counted on the great Saint to help him. But San Gennaro was no longer in his niche across the way. He was being carried through the streets, where all could see his hand uplifted in blessing, and could pin their money to the velvet-covered platform upon which he was seated.

The little boy lay watching the lights that flickered over walls and ceiling, falling on the pictures of his dead brothers and sisters, of his mother and father in their wedding garments, of Mount Vesuvius and the blue Bay of Naples. He shut his eyes to keep back the tears. Then a little grimy hand reached down to the floor where a beloved form was accustomed to lie. He turned his face to the wall,

but his bitter crying was drowned by the noise from the street below, which filled the room like the roar of a marching army.

Tomorrow came—the big day of the festival. Mulberry Street, having celebrated half the night, was up early, though footsore and heavy-eyed. Carlo ran to the neighbors, to the storekeepers. “My little dog Spotty—lost, yesterday—musta got hurt in the crowd. P’raps you seen him?” But no, no one had seen the little white dog with one black ear and four black paws.

The crowds increased steadily: organizations and societies arrived with banners and flags and marched with the Saint, who was carried through the streets on the shoulders of strong men and came back to his niche under the gay canopy with his feet almost buried in one-dollar—five-dollar—ten-dollar bills—tangible evidence of the hopes of the faithful that some miracle would be performed in their behalf. For had he not, throughout the ages, healed the sick and helped the needy?

By night there was such a jam around his shrine that it was almost impossible for anyone to move. Carlo wormed his way by inches through the mass of packed humanity and at last succeeded in reaching the pedestal on which the statue rested. All day long he had prayed to the Saint, but not until now had he had anything to offer him. He reached up and dropped a coin on top of the mound of bills. His mother had put it into his hand with the command, “Now go buy some spumonis and have a nice-a time. And forget dat leetla Spotty.”

Forget Spotty! He would hunt for him all night long—and tomorrow and forever—if need be.

He was pushed from the sidewalk in front of the Saint and began to edge his way toward a less-crowded block. His eyes searched the

packed windows and fire-escapes. Overhead the archway of lights blazed forth again—and still higher up the round full moon looked down, and smiled on saint and sinner alike. It is God's eyes—and God can see Spotty, thought Carlo, rubbing a grimy little fist into his own tired eyes. "Oh, *please* help me to find him," he prayed.

Bands were playing and a chorus singing "O Sole Mio," "Funiculi, Funicula," "Santa Lucia." The young people joined in with wild abandon. They would have danced had there been a single empty spot. In the eyes of the older ones was a look of exaltation.

But not even the music, which he loved, detained the little boy. He pushed past the undertaker's, past the big restaurant filled with gay young people, with fathers and mothers and children, eating and drinking, squandering with lavish unconcern hard-earned dollars. Past the corner where an automobile was being raffled—fifty cents a share for the benefit of the church. Past the old musty book store and the empty building where a wonderful picture of San Gennaro had been made on the floor with colored sawdust.

He turned down the side streets. "Spotty, here Spotty," he called. Grand Street, Broome and Baxter; back to Canal and up to Mott. He was so tired he could hardly walk, and utterly discouraged. San Gennaro had failed him; too busy and occupied to bother with a little boy and a little dog. His mother had also failed him; she had spoken roughly and ordered him out of her way. He had no friend in all the world and he was afraid to go on, through Chinatown.

He turned back slowly, dragging his tired feet through a quiet street that seemed to have been left out of the carnival. And there was the church—the church where San Gennaro stayed all the time except for these few days when he lived with his people. Carlo sat down on the steps, dreading to go back through the crowd. And

suddenly he remembered Our Lady. Just inside she stood, in a little chapel near the entrance. She wore a lovely blue gown and held the little Jesus close in her arms, and there was love and understanding in her face. She would care about a little boy who had lost his dog. Perhaps she was lonely and afraid in the big empty church. He would go in and kneel at her feet and ask her to help him.

Across the long bridge from Brooklyn a little dog trotted, dodging the automobiles, darting in and out among the trucks, escaping disaster by just the fraction of an inch. A frayed rope dragged from his collar, a rope that had tied him in a strange yard, after a long ride from his home on Mulberry Street.

The bridge was safely crossed at last and the streets began to take on familiar smells. He lifted his head and a piercing yelp rent the night air. He was spattered with mud, one paw had been hurt and his black ear drooped forlornly over a bloodshot eye. A well-fed cat hissed at him and he paid no attention, he whose greatest excitement was the chasing of cats—especially this cat.

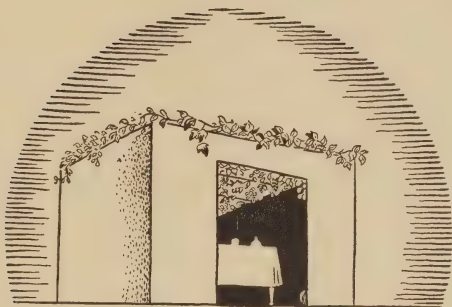
He crossed the Bowery and Mott Street and kept on down Canal, with his nose close to the pavement. At Mulberry he paused. He should turn north toward home, but the noise, the crowds, the glaring lights surprised and bewildered him. Suddenly he sniffed the sidewalk frantically, wagged his tail ecstatically, crossed Mulberry Street and trotted on for another block.

It was long past midnight when the Tarelli family locked the store, gathered up their pots and pans, their tiny stove and left-over food, and climbed wearily to their neglected apartment. Last night they had found Carlo in bed, fast asleep, his face streaked with tears.

Tonight he was nowhere to be found. It was hours since anyone had seen him. He was not at the neighbor's, nor in the store. They searched up and down the filthy, cluttered streets, peered into the empty booths, paused in front of the Saint, sitting now in darkness with one tired figure left to guard him through the remainder of the night, and finally went to the police station.

When dawn was breaking in Little Italy and the sacristan opened the church doors for early mass, he discovered a small sleeping figure curled up at the feet of the Blessed Virgin. Close at its side was a dirty, bedraggled little dog, who lifted an apologetic eye, half hidden by a drooping black ear, and feebly wagged a pathetic little tail.

HARVEST FESTIVAL



I

FIRST STREET on a Sunday afternoon was entirely different from First Street on week days. Miss Turner, eighth grade teacher from Public School number 39, walked almost timidly through the deserted neighborhood. Past the big brick building where from Monday to Friday she ruled a small but turbulent international kingdom. Past the imposing Polish church and one less imposing where the Italians worshiped. At a tall, rather forbidding tenement house she paused, then mounted a short flight of steps and pushed open the outer door. The dark hallway, with its long flights of stairs, seemed to lead to unknown dangers—certainly to an unknown situation.

Was it foolish of her to have come—to have given up her precious Sunday afternoon to an errand which she now believed was doomed to failure? She wouldn't mind visiting *Mrs. Lewisohn*; she was used to dealing with mothers. But Judith had said, "You must

see my father, Miss Turner—and on Sunday, because Saturday is our Sabbath. But I don't believe he will let me stay for rehearsals on Friday afternoons; our Sabbath begins at sundown, you know, and my mother needs me to help get ready."

Yes, she had been foolish to come, Miss Turner decided, standing there in the hallway until her eyes should become more accustomed to the darkness. For of course Judith's father wouldn't be able to see that a school rehearsal was more important than a Jewish holiday. This was Miss Turner's first personal contact with the problem of Jewish holidays which other schools were having to face all the time, for there were few Jewish families in the neighborhood of Public School 39.

However, having come this far it would be more foolish to turn back. Judith was the brightest pupil in her class; if she could not attend the rehearsals for the Harvest Festival, that great Thanksgiving pageant would be spoiled and the effort to teach American history by means of dramatics would have a real set-back. So Miss Turner climbed the three flights of stairs and knocked at A 4, according to Judith's directions.

Judith herself opened the door, her small dark face lighting up as she greeted her teacher and shyly introduced her to the three persons in the small living room.

"Grandfather, Miss Turner. But he doesn't speak English. And my brother Mendel—and my mother." Mrs. Lewisohn, tall and still youthful-looking, clasped her hand fervently. "I t'ankful you should come to see us."

"Father had to go to see a sick friend, and my other brother and sister went with him," Judith explained, "but Mendel can tell you all about our holidays."

The young man looked at her with grave, penetrating eyes and

placed a chair for her near the window.

"We are most happy to have Judith's teacher visit us." His voice was low and musical, but there was a restrained eagerness in it.

The old grandfather in skull cap and shoulder shawl, typically Jewish, with long white beard and dim meditative eyes, bent over the open book in his lap and muttered a Hebrew prayer.

"I am so glad to meet Judith's family." Miss Turner drew the girl toward her with a little loving gesture. She felt quite at home now. Perhaps it was just as well that the stern father of the family was absent.

Mendel leaned toward her. "Judith says you are interested in our Jewish holidays." She nodded.

"There are four children in our family, Miss Turner. We have all gone to the public schools and have had Christian teachers. You are the first one who has ever been in our home or taken the slightest interest in our holidays—except to reprove us when we stayed away from school on one of them."

Miss Turner was glad that the gathering twilight hid the blush that rose to her cheek. He had so completely misunderstood her motive in coming. But she must defend her fellow teachers.

"Don't blame us too much. A teacher's life is not an easy one. Especially in a neighborhood where people of many backgrounds and religions live."

"But how much better she could meet the needs of her pupils if she understood those backgrounds."

"Are *you* a teacher?" she asked, surprised at his intensity. His mother answered the question, her voice full of pride.

"My son, Mendel, he studies that he should be a rabbi."

The old grandfather closed his book. It was too dark to read any longer.

"My grandfather reads the Torah all day long," explained Mendel. "He has never learned English, although he has been in America for over thirty-five years. He went through terrible pogroms in Russia."

Miss Turner tried to recall what she knew about the Torah. Oh, yes, the Jewish Bible, she thought. Aloud she said, "Tell me more about him. Has he not been happy in America?"

"Oh, yes. But he is a Zionist. In Russia he lived in the Ghetto. In America he lives in the slums. Palestine, for him, is home, the land of his fathers, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Always he dreams of the Promised Land. At every Passover he says, 'Next year in Jerusalem.' "

The old man turned toward his grandson, murmuring some question. Mendel answered in Russian. Then he continued, "His religion is his whole life, the Torah his daily bread. From him have I learned to love these precious books of Moses and have longed to join the rabbis of Israel in their task of teaching. The money my father saved to send grandfather to Palestine is sending *me* to the theological seminary. But some day I shall be able to send him to the place he has longed for all his life—although father and I are not Zionists, you understand."

"But what could he do, an old man, alone in a strange land?" Miss Turner looked pityingly at the pathetic figure silhouetted against the window.

"That strange land, for him, is *home*. Anyway, we have friends in Tel-Aviv; they will take care of him."

Mrs. Lewisohn came in from the kitchen with a plate of twisted cakes and a glass of wine. "It would be a shame you should not eat."

"Sabbath cakes—*good!*" exclaimed Judith.

"That reminds me of what I really came for." Miss Turner nodded appreciatively as she sampled a cake. "I want Judith to stay at school on Friday afternoons. We are working on a harvest festival pageant, you know, and we can't do anything without Judith."

Mrs. Lewisohn looked appealingly at Mendel and he answered, "If she is back by sundown, yes, Miss Turner. Although my mother really needs her earlier."

"But there are several other Jewish children in the school. They don't have to leave early on Friday. Why is that?"

"I suppose they are Reformed Jews," he explained patiently. "But for us, the Orthodox, our Sabbath is a very sacred day. Mother lights the Sabbath candles—"

"Ah, yes," Mrs. Lewisohn interrupted. Her eyes rested lovingly on the seven-branched candlestick standing on a shelf. "And fresh bread we have and fresh whiteness of tablecloth and napkins. It would be good should Miss Turner come with us to Sabbath supper."

"Oh, *would* you, Miss Turner?" Judith's dark eyes sparkled. "Father will be here, and Rebecca and Ezra. Father breaks the bread and gives a piece to each one of us—"

"But before that," Mendel broke in, "we have special prayers. Before the meal—and at the end, of course. And there is a special blessing for the children. We all sing many joyful songs. Do come, Miss Turner, and go with us to the synagogue afterward."

"Do you really want me?" she asked incredulously.

"Of course we do. I always wanted to invite one of my teachers to our home. So now I'll invite Judith's."

"I should love to come." She was touched by his earnestness. "I suppose I could have the rehearsal earlier. But now I must go."

She stood up, but Mendel detained her.

"Stay a little longer, Miss Turner," he begged. "You are planning a harvest festival for the children in your school. Do you know about the harvest festival the Jews are celebrating this week and next?" He turned the lights on in the shadowy room and looked at her with an intensity that startled her.

"No, I'm afraid I am very ignorant about the Jewish festivals." She sat down again and waited.

"Is it right that a teacher should expect children to enter into the meaning of American holidays when she is ignorant of even the names of their religious holidays?"

"But this is America," she protested. Mendel walked restlessly up and down the room.

"Yes, and religious observances have no place in a public school. Nevertheless, no teacher can understand a Jewish child unless she knows something of his religious heritage."

"Tell me," she answered humbly.

"Forgive me! I feel it all too deeply." He sat down beside her. "But I would like you to know a little about our Jewish festivals. They help to preserve the historic memory of our people. The Christians celebrate Christmas with candles and rejoicing. We have the Feast of Lights—Hannukah—in December also, when we rejoice because, under Judas Maccabeus, we defeated Antiochus Epiphanes. You have a holiday on New Year's. Our New Year is just over—a day like yours, of new beginnings and resolutions, to commemorate the creation of heaven and earth. And a preparation for the great Day of Atonement, ten days later, which begins by the blowing of a trumpet. This is a fast day, a day of repentance for sin, Yom Kippur—you have heard of it?"

She nodded.

"And now, next Thursday, begins our harvest festival, which lasts eight days—Succoth, we call it, which means a booth, because the children of Israel lived in booths during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. It is also called the Feast of Ingathering, and we rejoice over the harvest and God's protecting care—like the American Thanksgiving."

Mrs. Lewisohn came over to her son and put a restraining hand on his shoulder. "Perhaps Miss Turner will be tired with so much talk," she warned.

"Oh, no! please go on. I can't tell you how interested I am."

Without apology he went on. "On the last day our Thanksgiving is for the Torah—the five books of Moses. Then we finish the year's cycle of reading. But what would interest you most are the booths, built in the yards and on the roofs. In the old country the people really lived in them for the eight days. Where my grandfather first lived when he came to this country there was a yard in the back, and there he and my father built a succoth each year, where the family ate and slept for all the eight days. But now in the city we cannot do that. Some of the synagogues have beautiful booths—really, you should see them, Miss Turner."

"Oh, I should love to. How can I? Could I go with you to your synagogue—or isn't it permitted?"

"But yes, of course you should go," Mrs. Lewisohn answered. Her anxiety for her guest had vanished in pride over her learned son. Judith also drank in every word he was saying. The old grandfather was fast asleep, head bent forward, patriarchal beard a white patch against his black coat.

"We should be most happy to have you with us"—Mendel made a stiff little bow—"but I would suggest that you go uptown to our great synagogue, where they have the most beautiful succoth in all

the city."

"Alone?"

"Yes. Why not? You would be more than welcome. Next Thursday at five-thirty is the first service. I beg that you do not miss it. You will hear our greatest rabbi and the entire service is most interesting."

"But I wouldn't understand it. It's in Hebrew, I suppose?"

"Yes, but you would have the prayer book with English on one side."

"I can't promise. But I do thank you for telling me all this. Is Succoth your greatest festival?"

"Oh, no! Passover is our greatest *festival*—in the spring, about the time of your Easter. But of course New Year and Yom Kippur are our most important holy days."

"Yes, Miss Turner," Judith joined in excitedly, "for Passover we have all new things on our table—and matzos—and the Passover food, and because I am the youngest I ask the questions. Will you come?"

Miss Turner smiled. Her education was progressing almost too rapidly.

"That's a long time from now, Judith, and perhaps your father would not want me."

"But he would, Miss Turner." Mendel reached for his hat and coat as Miss Turner rose to go. "This is a home feast, full of beauty and symbolism, celebrating the story of the Exodus. I am taking you to the subway," he added.

"But we haven't told you about Pentecost and Purim," Judith cried, following them to the door.

"We must leave something for next time." Miss Turner stooped and kissed the eager little girl.

All the way to the subway Mendel continued to talk—learnedly, pedantically. Poor boy, she thought, all his life he has been longing to pour this out to “teacher.”

“And so, you see, all these ceremonies and festivals are the poetry of our religion, the links that hold my generation to that of my father and grandfather. They are just the outer covering for the great and lofty teachings of Judaism. And the essence of our religion is summed up in one verse from the Torah: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God. The Lord is One.’ And so—”

“One thing I’ve been meaning to ask you,” she interrupted. “You speak all the time of the Torah—the Pentateuch, in other words. But what about the Talmud?”

“Ah!” he exclaimed. “You should hear my grandfather read from the Talmud! In a word, it is like an encyclopedia that gives information on every detail of Jewish life and thought—law, history, daily living, even legend. But it all grew out of the Torah and centers around it.”

They had reached the subway and she held out her hand. “I can’t tell you what you’ve done for me. I feel that I have entered a whole new world.”

“Perhaps you have,” he answered. “Thank you for listening so patiently. And forgive me if I’ve bored you.”

II

After school on Thursday Miss Turner went to the public library and asked to see the Jewish encyclopedia. She read the long historical statement on the synagogue and studied the drawings that showed its bare rectangular interior, with its women’s gallery, its railed platform in the center, its reading desk and, at the eastern end (“toward Jerusalem”) opposite the entrance, the “Ark,” fitting

abode for the precious scrolls of the law. Then she turned to "Succoth" and read pages more, a description of this festival of joy and gladness, showing how the men carry in one hand palm branches bound up with twigs of willow and myrtle and wave them before the Lord, and in the other hand a citron. But why the citron? she wondered.

Then she entered a bus and rode to the beautiful temple which she had admired as far back as she could remember—but never in all her life had it occurred to her that she could go inside. She felt quite prepared for the long ritual of reading, chanting and waving of palms. She was not prepared, however, for the men—or rather for their prayer shawls and hats. A great company of men, young and old, in a place of worship, with silk-fringed shawls across their shoulders and hats on their heads! How amazing! And yet she should have known that it would be like this. And as they chanted they held the fringe to their lips, swaying gently back and forth.

Recovering from her first surprise, her eyes followed the rabbis and elders who were conducting the service. They stood on a platform just in front of the elaborate doors of the Ark. Beautiful columns supported a gorgeous canopy over the arched doorway, where the "tables of the law" and a perpetual lamp added to the significance and architectural beauty of this simple and unadorned building. Then the doors were opened, the scrolls of the law were lifted out and their embroidered satin coverings removed, and the Torah held open before the appointed reader.

Miss Turner followed the service as best she could. The account of the Exodus from the books of Moses, the singing of the Hallel or songs of praise—Psalms 113 to 118. She copied carefully on a slip of paper the Succoth hymn and one of the Succoth prayers.

"We pour forth our hearts unto Thee, O Keeper of Israel,

through this season of joyous thanksgiving, for thy many bounties with which Thou dost bless us, and for the protecting care with which thy love dost watch over us. As thou didst cause our fathers to dwell in the Succah of thy glory amid the perils of the wilderness, so spread thou over us and over all Israel the Succah of thy love and peace."

And then she settled back to listen to the sermon.

The sermon was a surprise. She wasn't expecting the beautiful voice nor the stirring words that bit into the heart and soul of one listener at least.

"This is our festival of thanksgiving and rejoicing. But how rejoice when again the people of Europe are hunted and robbed, betrayed and killed? How rejoice when once again our world is bearing the burden of another terrible war?"

How indeed? thought Miss Turner, leaning forward the better to catch the expression on that fine fearless face. The cultured voice continued: "How rejoice and give thanks when fear grips the heart and doubt fills the mind—doubt of the goodness of God, of his care for his bewildered children?

"Why has this disaster come upon the world? I shall tell you, my friends. Because of sin. Because of greed and selfishness and narrow nationalism and the cruelty and hardness of the human heart.

"But why must you and I suffer? I shall tell you that also. Because so often we have forgotten God, and have grown self-centered and self-satisfied. Why has the Jew survived through ages of persecution and suffering? A people without a country, without unity, living in every part of the world? We have survived because of our faith in God, because of our belief in his sacred teachings delivered to us by his servant Moses. But here in America many of

us have grown careless and have lost the sense of God's reality. Therefore our sufferings loom large. But when we have God, suffering does not count. Therefore I beg of you, my people, return to God. Then and only then can we rejoice at this harvest festival. God lives, he has *not* forsaken his people. Therefore we rejoice and are glad and give thanks." They sang the Succoth hymn which she had copied from the hymn book. And then the congregation moved slowly through the aisles and up to the roof, where the great booth had been erected. From the green boughs that arched over the top huge bunches of purple grapes hung suspended, like chandeliers of colored glass. Inside there were tables with fruit and cakes for all, and at one end were seated the rabbis and the elders.

Miss Turner stepped out from the crowded booth and walked to the far corner of the roof. The great city with its millions of lights was spread out in every direction, as far as her eye could reach. Miles away lived the one Jewish family whom she knew. And the school where she tried to teach the ways and ideals of America to children of whose backgrounds she was almost totally ignorant. Why not have a pageant of their holidays sometime? But that will not help them to learn American history. No, but isn't there something bigger than memorizing dates? Isn't racial understanding, in such a time as this, the only thing that will save America from what is happening in Europe?

Anyway, she decided firmly and finally, I'm going to tell the children tomorrow when we rehearse for our harvest festival, about *this* harvest festival. I might even teach them some of the verses from the Succoth hymn. She took the verses from her bag and by the light of the lamp at the entrance to the glowing booth, read them over slowly and carefully.

*For garnered fields and meadows cropped,
And orchards plucked of peach and pear.
Lord, what thy hand has given us,
For this we bring our grateful prayer.*

*To Thee we come with hearts made glad
For wheat that is our staff and stay.
For oats and rye that caught the glint
Of sunset on a summer's day.*

*We thank Thee, yea, for throbs of love
That glorify each earthborn soul
And link all pulsing hearts to Thee
In one vast universal whole.*

GUESTS FOR THANKSGIVING



I

WHEN her beloved pastor asked his congregation how many of them would like to invite one or two refugees for Thanksgiving dinner, he seemed to be looking directly at old Mrs. Brownlee. She sat up very straight in her pew, set her mouth in a hard line and almost, but not quite, replied aloud, "Now see here, young man. At my time of life you can't expect me to take strange people—immigrants and refugees at that—into my home. Anyway, my own young people are coming, so that settles it!"

But it didn't quite settle it, for soon she added, "However, I'll send you a check that will feed several of your refugees. After all, though Thanksgiving is a day for home folk we must not forget the strangers." Having answered the appeal satisfactorily to herself, old Mrs. Brownlee settled back to enjoy the rest of the service. After church she paused long enough to explain about the check,

then went on out into the frosty air and down the steps to her car. Old William, who was both chauffeur and butler, tucked her in and drove her home to the lonely house and her solitary dinner, prepared by Martha, his wife.

It meant real sacrifice to send the check. No one knew that Mrs. Brownlee's once adequate income was diminishing, nor that a terrible fear gripped her heart, the fear of losing her old home and going to live with one or the other of her children. They had asked, even urged her to make her home with them, half the time with John, the other half with Alice. She trembled at the very thought. Leave New York for a permanent home in the West—live in one room in a house already overcrowded with grandchildren—adapt herself to a new environment and new neighbors? Impossible.

Much as she loved her children, her yearly visit to their homes was almost too much for her. But this year they were all coming to spend the Thanksgiving holiday with her. There would be a feast worthy of the occasion, even though it meant rigid economy for a long time to come.

Early in the next week two letters arrived in the familiar handwriting of her son and of her daughter. Old Mrs. Brownlee opened them with trembling fingers. Not even to herself would she acknowledge that premonition of what they contained. She read them through bravely, one hand nervously clutching Tawny, the tortoiseshell cat, who had climbed into her lap. John wrote that one of the children had been exposed to the measles, so of course they would not be able to come for Thanksgiving. Alice, that she knew her mother would understand the last-minute decision to spend the holiday with her husband's parents. It was the only way to avoid hurt feelings. She was mailing a box of chocolates and wished her mother a restful day, free from the responsibility of

entertaining a group of noisy children.

Old Mrs. Brownlee sat for a while, absentmindedly stroking the soft fur of the purring cat. Then she spoke aloud, a habit she had acquired since she had lived alone.

"Well, if I can't have my own children I'll ask for the names of two refugees and invite them to church and then to dinner. Thanksgiving is a day for guests as well as for families."

She spoke a bit defiantly, for Tawny was regarding her with two bright and penetrating eyes. But her heart sank at the thought of entertaining strangers. All her life Mrs. Brownlee had had a dread of meeting strangers.

II

It had snowed during the night and the city streets were covered with a soft white blanket, not yet spoiled by soot and ashes, or the thaw that was due by afternoon.

The children were making the most of the Thanksgiving holiday. Sleds were out for the first time, snowballing was in order, and the older ones were going parkward with skates over their shoulders.

Overhead a benignant sun smiled down on the romping children. To the west the towers and spires of Manhattan gleamed against the bluest of blue skies.

The butcher shop of Max Hartwig, over on the East Side, was tightly closed and shuttered. Even upstairs, where the family lived, the shades were drawn, for they had all gone to spend the day in the country. Max, the jolly red-faced butcher, owned the shop, which had a small room at the rear, now occupied by the young man who was bookkeeper and cashier.

He was a very quiet young man, not at all like the jovial Max, and there was much speculation about him in the neighborhood.

Some said that he had been driven out of Germany for political reasons. Others declared positively that he was a nephew of Max, the black sheep of the family whom Max was sheltering. On this one subject Max was as secretive as was the young man himself. The only real information that the neighborhood had about him was that he had appeared very suddenly, with several boxes and bags covered with foreign labels, and had been installed as cashier in the shop. He was courteous but uncommunicative, and seemingly quite unaware of the curiosity his presence aroused in the patrons of the shop. He did not accompany Max and his family to the Roman Catholic church, nor did he attend the Jewish synagogue around the corner. He was evidently quite irreligious, or there was some secret in the past that made him afraid to mingle with honest people.

It was therefore with much speculation that the neighbors who were cleaning the snow from doorsteps and sidewalks on Thanksgiving morning watched the mysterious young man emerge from the butcher shop and walk west. Where could he be going so early, on a holiday?

III

On Thanksgiving morning an attractive young woman walked down the steps of the Y.W.C.A. and turned hesitatingly toward the park, which was several blocks to the east. To Mrs. Robert Terry, for whom she worked, she was known as "Margaret." A few days ago Mrs. Terry had said to her, "We shall be away for Thanksgiving and for the three following days. I am going to give you all this time off, with full pay."

And a few days before that Mrs. Terry had explained to a friend: "Margaret is a good cook and thoroughly reliable. But after

four months she is as silent and secretive as the day she came. She has a room at the Y.W.C.A. They told me she is a German refugee and it's very evident that her mind is somewhere else. Not a very cheerful person to have around, but I only pay her half what I usually pay a cook, so what can you expect?"

When she reached the park, Margaret stood still, gazing with eyes as blue and sparkling as the sky at the snow-laden trees and bushes.

"How beautiful!" she cried aloud. "It is like fairyland!"

A group of children were having a noisy game of snowball. Margaret ran to join them and they greeted her joyfully. Soon a sedate young man walked past them, his unseeing eyes fixed on the street ahead. Suddenly Margaret threw the ball she was holding straight at that uncompromising back. The young man turned sharply, anger in his face. Then, as though the unexpected sight of a rosy-cheeked girl gazing gleefully at his bewildered countenance had transformed him into a naughty small boy, he scooped up a handful of soft snow and threw it full in her face. Before she could retaliate, he was gone. Margaret wiped her streaming face and hands and straightened her bedraggled clothing. "I'm a nice looking person to be going to church and then to somebody's house," she murmured. "But, oh! wasn't it fun!"

"Good-bye," the children shouted, as she left them and hurried down the street in the direction the young man had taken.

IV

Mrs. Brownlee awoke with a start. Something unusual was happening today. What was it? Yes, of course, Thanksgiving and her children were coming home. Then she remembered. No, not her children but two strangers. She sat up in the big walnut bed and

shivered. She felt old and tired and inadequate, and she surveyed the day ahead with much apprehension. But she must conceal her feeling from William and Martha. They were rather difficult sometimes—though what she could do without them she could not imagine. Of her plans for Thanksgiving they distinctly disapproved. "How do you know, ma'am, but what they be Nazi spies?" William had suggested darkly. And old Martha had held up her hands in horror when she realized that she was to prepare a *real* Thanksgiving dinner, with all the fixin's.

"A dinner like that for them refugees and you starvin' yourself for weeks to come to make up for it! And then all the excitement, ma'am. You know you can't stand strangers."

This was all too true, but it had only spurred Mrs. Brownlee on to further preparations toward the success of her day.

Now that the day was actually here, she wondered if she had made a mistake. Then she rallied her failing courage and explained the situation to Tawny, curled up on the bed beside her.

"After all, perhaps a little excitement will do me good. I'm not seventy-five yet, and if I want to give a dinner party who's to stop me? It's a glorious sunny day and I shall arise and count my blessings, and go to church to give thanks, as has been my habit as far back as I can remember."

She went early to church and watched anxiously for her two guests. "Mr. Emil Muller, Miss Margaret Hoffman"—she must not forget their names. Perhaps they wouldn't come after all. That would indeed be a calamity. Perhaps they were more afraid than she was. Her eyes wandered to the colorful decorations around the base of the pulpit—pumpkins, grapes, apples and oranges against a background of yellow wheat. Then the usher brought the young man to her pew and she held out her hand and greeted him with all

the cordiality she could command. When the girl came and she introduced them she caught a look of startled surprise in the young man's eyes, and saw the warm color creep from the girl's white throat to her smooth cheeks. Do they already know each other? Mrs. Brownlee asked herself. Then the opening hymn was announced and they stood up to sing the challenging words of Martin Luther:

*A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing.*

The hymn book they were sharing shook a little, but it was Emil Muller's hand that trembled, not old Mrs. Brownlee's. On her other side the girl sang out bravely, though sudden tears blotted out the English words. She sang in German, as did several others in that congregation. For many of them it was their first American service in the land which had offered them a refuge from bitter persecution. Sitting with family groups—fathers and mothers, children, young people home from college—the strangers joined with all their hearts in this service of praise to God for his goodness and mercy.

The preacher spoke with great earnestness, reminding his people of that brave little company of pilgrims who in 1621 had given thanks for food and freedom and safety, and invited the Indians to be their guests at the first harvest festival. He read the first Thanksgiving Day proclamation given in New York in the Year of our Lord, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty-Nine and signed by "G. Washington"; also the proclamation of the present year. He traced the history of American democracy, comparing young America with the countries of Europe at war. He spoke of happy family reunions and the Thanksgiving feast prepared and

waiting in countless American homes, and compared this joyous festival with the plight of scattered refugees and hungry children.

Then he addressed the guests in his congregation. "We welcome you to our service," he said. "Perhaps many of you, driven from your homes, misunderstood and sometimes unwelcome even here—perhaps you wonder what you have to be thankful for. Well, here is *liberty*—of life, of speech, of worship; here is respect for the individual and a chance to build life anew; and here in this church and in many another like it are welcome and friendliness and the right hand of fellowship." He ended with a heartfelt appeal to all to remember the religious significance of the day. "Our one wholly American religious festival," he called it; "a day in which to thank God for his unfailing goodness and mercy."

They sang "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" and "America the Beautiful" and then the brief service was over.

Old Mrs. Brownlee walked down the steps of the church with a young man on one side and a young woman on the other, as she had done so many times in the distant past. She held her head high and stepped into her car with an alacrity which surprised even herself.

At home dinner was ready, and what a dinner it was! Truly "American" in all that that implies of turkey, cranberries and the other customary accompaniments. Mrs. Brownlee, soft white hair parted in the middle, her black dress adorned with a collar of old point lace and fastened with a diamond brooch, sat at the head of her gleaming table and tried valiantly to put her guests at ease.

"When I was a little girl I lived on a farm—William, pass the rolls to Mr. Muller—I was the only child but I had a great many cousins and they all came to our house for Thanksgiving." Her eyes were far away now, her voice slow and reminiscent. "For me,

Thanksgiving was a more wonderful day than Christmas, even. We drove in our sleighs to church, where we met all the cousins and their fathers and mothers. After the service they all came home with us."

William, immaculate in a white linen coat, silently removed the first course and brought in the second.

"It is all like a dream," Margaret said softly—"and to think that I dreaded to come!"

"I was afraid too, and thought I had nothing to be thankful for, just as the preacher said." Emil leaned across the table and Mrs. Brownlee caught the look that flashed from brown eyes to blue and back again.

They exclaimed over the dessert like eager children. It was easier to talk now, so they lingered at the table, discussing America and Thanksgiving Day. The city noises were shut out, the sun shone in upon silver and damask and glass, over a great bowl of autumn fruit that formed the centerpiece. On a side table a vase of Talisman roses matched the yellow and orange of the fruit. Almost reluctantly they moved into the book-lined living room and sat down in front of the snapping fire. Then, as they sipped their coffee in that atmosphere of peace and security, Emil began to talk.

"I think it is only fair to tell you something about myself." The words were addressed to his hostess, but she felt that he was speaking to the girl and that the girl knew it. Tawny strolled majestically into the room and sought his accustomed place on his mistress' lap.

"I shall be—how do you say—brief," Emil went on, his eyes sober and clouded, as when Mrs. Brownlee had first observed them. "It is like this. I am a teacher in a school in Bonn. My father is also a teacher—a professor in the great University. He is well known, and my mother also. She is a musician. I have a very happy life at

home with my brothers and sisters. We have much love—" He broke off suddenly, his gaze fixed on the glowing fire. Margaret came softly over and sat on a low stool at Mrs. Brownlee's feet. Even so had her own daughter sat, long ago, recalled Mrs. Brownlee. It was with an obvious effort that Emil when on. "Then suddenly everything was changed. My father was in a concentration camp, my brothers and sisters hiding with our mother in the home of friends and I on my way to America."

Mrs. Brownlee leaned forward and put her hand on his shoulder. "Why? Oh, why?" she asked.

"Because my mother's father was Jewish, although we were all members of the Lutheran church. And when my father was asked to choose between his wife and his position, he spoke out bitterly against so great an injustice. That night he was taken to the concentration camp. My position also was taken away and so—" The pause was longer this time. It was Margaret who broke the silence, her eyes on the leaping flames of the fire. How seldom these two looked at each other, Mrs. Brownlee thought.

"You had friends here in America?"

"We had one friend. I shall tell you about him. Long ago he had a butcher shop in Bonn—was, in fact, the family butcher. Always he was much devoted to my father. Then he came to America, for he wished to bring up his family here—he is not Jewish, you understand. So he bought a shop and became a citizen. He offered to bring one of us over and I was the one chosen, because I knew English well and bookkeeping also. So I came and am the bookkeeper in his shop. To him I owe everything. And now I work night and day to help the others. But my father—he is old and—" His voice trembled and trailed off into silence again.

Mrs. Brownlee drew the girl closer and patted her curly hair.

The young man saw the gesture and his tense face changed, softened. He leaned back in his chair and watched the face of the girl. The three of them sat quietly in the gathering dusk. There was an atmosphere of peace and tranquility in the gracious room. And there was something else—faint, intangible, but yes, Mrs. Brownlee could not mistake it, an air of romance. On that very hearthstone she had seen her son turn toward a girl with that same look in his eyes—the girl he had married. And from this same room, years ago, she had slipped out quietly when a certain young man had come to see her daughter.

"I think I shall leave you for a little while." Old Mrs. Brownlee's voice broke the silence and she rose stiffly from the low chair.

"Oh, no—please don't!" The girl scrambled to her feet in evident alarm.

"I thought perhaps you would like to talk together, alone. You are from the same country—and I am here the foreigner," she said smiling.

"Oh, no"—there was no mistaking the panic in Margaret's voice—"I want you to hear my story also, dear Mrs. Brownlee."

I have been too hasty, Mrs. Brownlee thought, sinking back into her chair. They do not know it themselves yet, the dear young things. Aloud she murmured, "I want very much to hear whatever you feel free to tell."

Margaret looked into the fire. "I too shall be brief. Strangely enough, I am a teacher also—a kindergartner. I love little children and I have been trained to teach them and to care for them." She turned and looked quite frankly at the young man. "When I saw the children in the park this morning playing with the snow, I could not stay away from them." He flashed a quick smile at her but did not reply.

"I am all alone," she continued. "My father, who was Jewish, died long ago; my mother, when all our troubles began—it is now five years. My school was searched and closed, the children forbidden to have anything to do with me, my papers and everything taken from me. They said I was communist. I had taught the children the Volga Boat Song, because we were learning folk songs. I have been here a year. I cannot find teaching to do—not even governess for little children. It is because of my accent, I know. I must learn better English. So to be a cook in someone's kitchen is all I can do. And that I am doing now."

Mrs. Brownlee hesitated a moment, then she yielded to an unaccountable impulse and let two strangers see into her inmost heart.

"I too have a story to tell. It will seem very tame and ordinary compared to what you two have been through. Nevertheless, as you have given me your confidence, I shall give you mine. I am just a lonely old woman, living in a big house with two servants. I have lost my interest in life, because no one needs me any more. That, I think, is the uttermost depth of desolation—not to be needed. But you have made me feel that I may still be of service. Here is my home—my books which I long to have used. And my church with its pew that once held my own son and daughter. Will you not sometimes take their places, you two? And I can help you with English, my dear. We can talk together as often as you are able to come."

They were surprised and touched, she could see that. And yes, they accepted her offer with real gladness. But all three were a little constrained, perhaps because of these unaccustomed confidences. It was almost a relief when William came in with a tray of sandwiches and fruit. He pulled down the shades and switched on the lamps.

"Let us not forget to give thanks," Mrs. Brownlee said, "for this

Thanksgiving Day." She was very tired. She could almost wish to be alone. But the young man and the girl lingered a little longer, as though both were loath to leave the quiet room. They had forgotten her and her problem, in their dawning interest in each other, Mrs. Brownlee realized. But she understood. How could these two harassed young souls conceive of her loneliness. Foolish perhaps, to have told them. They belonged together, these two—anyone could see that. Even William had gone out of the room with a knowing smile on his worn old face. But they needed her; how much she had to give them. How wonderful to have another wedding sometime, right here in this old room. She thrilled at the thought.

And now they were going—stammering their thanks. Mrs. Brownlee gathered up the yellow roses and thrust them into Margaret's hands. She slipped a box of chocolates into the pocket of Emil's overcoat. Mrs. Brownlee had never cared for chocolates herself, but she knew how young people felt about them.

She went with them to the door, the purring cat curled up in the hollow of her arm. As her guests descended the steps together, she heard Emil say, "I am taking you home, Margaret. And soon we shall meet again—*here!*"

SAINT BARBARA



I. IN THE OFFICE

WHEN she read the invitation, Barbara Zaloom was distinctly annoyed. She had come to the office early in order to write some personal letters. And then the postman had handed her a square envelope addressed to herself in a round childish hand. Some advertisement, she thought, but why sent to me? She tore it open and read that she was invited to the Art Museum on Saturday, the third of December, to witness a dramatization of the Syrian Feast of Saint Barbara. The story of the feast would be told by Miss Aniseh Zaloom. At the bottom of the printed invitation was written in that same round hand:

Dear Cousin Barbara,

Please come to the Museum on Saturday. And please come home with us and help to celebrate the feast as we used to do when you lived with us. Father says no use to ask you. You don't care any more for your humble relatives. But even if you have forgotten *us*, I'm sure you don't

forget Saint Barbara's feast, because you used to tell me how you loved it when you were a little girl in Syria.

Your loving,

Aniseh

The telephone rang and Barbara answered it mechanically. No, Mr. Stanley hadn't come in yet—not before ten o'clock—yes, she would give him the message.

She put back the receiver and slowly reread the invitation. Of course she wouldn't go—to either the Museum or her uncle's home. For two years she had been trying to forget the past, to blot out all reminders of her Syrian background and upbringing. She was wholly American now, private secretary to Mr. Archibald Stanley, intimate friend of the intellectual and cultured Alicia Van Dyke with whom she lived. Her little cousin, Aniseh Zaloom, belonged to that past which she was trying so hard to forget. As for the Feast of Saint Barbara, she was done forever with such foolish, superstitious observances.

II. IN THE MUSEUM

The beautiful sculpture court of the Museum was filled with people. They occupied the hundreds of chairs that had been placed in every available spot; they leaned against the statues, sat on the edge of the marble fountain and overflowed into the colonnade which surrounded the court on a higher level. They were a well-behaved crowd made up of men and women, old and young, from all walks of life and representing many nationalities. The murmur of voices mingled with the splash of water from the fountain and the faint notes of an unfamiliar musical instrument coming from some distant corner of the great building. At one side of the court a small platform was the focus of all eyes. On it were several costly

rugs, a low table surrounded by cushions, and a small tabouret, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, which supported a brass tray, a long-handled coffee pot and many delicate coffee cups set in silver holders. A tall hubble-bubble pipe, or *narghile*, gave the final Oriental touch to this little scene.

At the back of the stage hung a picture which had been brought for the occasion from the Museum's gallery of paintings—a copy of the famous "Saint Barbara" by Palma Vecchio, which hangs in the church of Santa Maria Formosa in Venice.

Suddenly there was silence in the hall as a young woman stepped from behind a screen and began to speak.

"My dear friends, we are delighted to see so many of you here this afternoon to help us celebrate the Feast of Saint Barbara. This is the Syrian festival in the series which the Museum is putting on this winter, called 'The World in Our Midst.' Syria, as you know, is the tiny country on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. There Judaism and Christianity had their birth, and Mohammedanism took root and flourished. Therefore this small part of the earth's surface is of greater significance to mankind than any other country in the world. And there the old Aramaic and Greek languages have been displaced by the Arabic, which will be used in our little play this afternoon. Our city is proud of its Syrian citizens and the Museum is most grateful to them for arranging this program for us. Tonight in the homes of Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Syrians there will be a celebration exactly like the one you are going to see here. It is a family feast, and soon you will see on this platform the children gathering around the table, speaking pieces and singing their song to Saint Barbara, who is one of the great saints of the Syrian Church.

"Tomorrow morning, December fourth, she will be blessed and

honored in the Syrian churches and there will be special prayers in her behalf. Before you leave the Museum, you must come closer to this picture of Saint Barbara which, though only a copy, is one of our treasures. There are many famous paintings of Saint Barbara in the galleries and churches of Europe, for she was a great favorite with the Old Masters. She is always seen standing by a tower, carrying a palm, or a chalice and wafer.

"And now Miss Aniseh Zaloom will tell you the story of this martyr saint."

A young girl came to the platform, dressed in a long flowing robe, her dark hair almost concealed by a veil held in place by a spangled head-band. She looked out over the sea of faces and began to speak in a frightened little voice.

"Saint Barbara lived at the end of the third century in a city far away on the other side of the world——"

"Louder!" came a voice from the back of the room.

The girl turned toward the pictured Saint as though beseeching her help, and the audience waited anxiously. Then she stepped to the edge of the platform and continued without further fear: "She was very beautiful, and her father, whose name was Dioscorus, had her shut up in a tower to keep her from the outside world. He was a pagan, and when he went away on a long journey Barbara wrote a letter to a man named Origen and asked him to tell her about Christianity. Then Origen sent his disciple, disguised as a physician, to make Barbara a Christian and baptize her. Before her father went on his journey, he had told his workmen to build a beautiful bath house for his daughter. They put two windows in it but Barbara made them put another window in. When her father returned he asked her about the third window and she said, 'I believe in God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and so I must

have three windows to represent the Trinity.' Then her father was very angry and he had her brought before the judge and she was tortured and then ordered to be beheaded. Her own father carried out this order, and as he came down from the mountain where he had taken Barbara to kill her, he was struck by lightning and so he died.

"And the church has greatly honored her because of her virtue and courage, and made her a Saint, and she saves people from danger, like lightning and storm and fire, and those who pray to her shall not die without receiving the Sacraments. And so in the pictures of her we see the cup and wafer, and sometimes a sword because she was killed with a sword—and always the tower with *three* windows. The Syrians have remembered her through all these centuries and every Syrian girl who is named Barbara tries to live like this great Saint, in courage and purity and devotion to religion."

During all this time a young woman had been standing on the edge of the crowd, looking over the heads of the seated audience with such intentness and interest that more than one of those near her had turned to regard her curiously. There was nothing American in that lovely face; she was obviously Syrian, with black hair and eyes, long curling lashes and a dreamy oval face. She was dressed in the latest style, and the jaunty little hat, tilted over one side of her thick lustrous hair, had a decidedly exotic appearance.

As the girl on the platform finished her speech, the girl in the audience clapped her hands and said aloud in perfect English, "Bravo, Aniseh, that was well done!"

Then as a group of children ran out on the platform, she pushed the crowd aside in her eagerness to get nearer, and found a seat on the base of a marble statue. "*Salaam alaykum*" (Peace be with

you), she called softly to the children. One of them carried a bowl of boiled wheat, the traditional food of Saint Barbara, which she placed on the table, then sprinkled raisins and nuts over the top, and lighted some gay little candles. The other children circled the table, singing in Arabic the many verses of the song to Saint Barbara: "Saint Barbara, God chose her to spread Christianity. Her father built her a bath house," and so on through the entire story. Then they dropped down on the cushions surrounding the table and pretended to eat the wheat, while a young man produced plaintive Syrian music from an instrument called the *ood*. An older woman drew puffs of smoke through the long tube attached to the glass *narghile*. A small boy read a poem in Arabic, and the entertainment was over.

"Cousin Barbara!" Aniseh cried a few minutes later. "I saw you in the audience. I was sure you would come. You'll come home with me now and stay for the evening?"

"No, darling, I can't." Barbara returned her young cousin's embrace with a warmth that surprised even herself. "But I thank you for the invitation and you must give my love to the family. You did beautifully today and I'm proud of you. Now I must hurry home." She turned swiftly and was lost in the crowd.

III. IN THE HOME

That same evening, in their home not far from the Museum, the Zaloom family prepared to celebrate the Feast of Saint Barbara. It was a very small and crowded home—far too small for Anees Zaloom, Zaheda, his wife, and the three children, Aniseh, Gibran and George. Far too small also for the other branches of the family who were coming for Saint Barbara's eve. But because Anees Zaloom was the oldest the feast must be celebrated with him.

By eight o'clock they were all assembled, the table was ready with a big dish of fruit in the center, plates of cake and pastry at one end and the gaily colored Saint Barbara candles sending out their flickering lights. From the kitchen the wheat dish, steaming hot, had just been brought in. The children started to sing the Saint Barbara song, while Mrs. Zaloom sprinkled the wheat with nuts and spices, raisins and Jordan almonds.

Suddenly an unexpected guest appeared in the doorway.

"Cousin Barbara!" The song stopped abruptly and the children stared in undisguised astonishment. Involuntarily the guest's hand went to her heart, and she said again what she had said in the Museum that afternoon.

"Salaam alaykum!"

Her Uncle Anees held out his hand and drew her into the circle.

"Barbárah! Alaykum salaam. You are welcome, my child."

They had not seen her for more than a year, although she had lived in this family for seven years, ever since she had come as an orphan from faraway Syria. At first, during the feast, they were all a little stiff and uncomfortable, but later, as they sipped Turkish coffee and cracked pistachio nuts, they questioned her, as is the right of a family toward one of their own.

"Do you like living with Americans?"

"Have you still got that grand job?"

Sometimes there was irony in the questions. "So the Syrians are not good enough for you?" "How could you leave your grand friends and come to spend the evening with humble relatives?" She answered patiently—and guardedly. But her homesick eyes belied her short answers. When her uncle spoke to her with the Syrian accent on her name, Barbárah, she fought back the tears.

But she was not ready to show even him her heart, so she withdrew to the bedroom, beckoning Aunt Zaheda to follow her. She shut the door against the noisy children, the radio, the talk of the three brothers, her uncles, and began to untie a parcel lying on the bed with her wraps. "See." She held up a dainty dress and shook out the folds of the long, full skirt. "I brought this for Aniseh, and some other things."

"Thank you, Barbara," her aunt interrupted quietly. "You are very kind. Aniseh will be delighted."

"Oh, it is nothing. I have far more than I need. I should have remembered that Aniseh is sixteen." Barbara apologized.

"Yes, she is almost a young lady." Aniseh's mother sighed. "And she has so little in the way of pretty clothes. But it has been very hard for us since you—since your uncle's business wasn't so good. We had to move into this little flat. The children are growing big and we need more room. The flat in front is vacant now, two more bedrooms and much better light and air, but of course we can't afford it."

"Oh, Aunt Zaheda, how *do* you manage?" Barbara's eyes swept the small bedroom completely filled by the two double beds. "It's a shame—of course you need more room!"

"Oh, we get along. The two little boys in here and Aniseh in the living room. Lots of people have it much worse. And yet——"

"I am tired, I must go." Barbara spoke suddenly and went out into the living room to say good night.

"Not yet, Barbárah." Uncle Anees drew her down to the empty chair beside him. "Gibran wants to show you how well he can read. It is from Kahlil Gibran, my old favorite, you know. And little Gibran feels that he has a special claim on the poet for whom he

was named. But you never did care much for him, did you? Too Syrian for our young American, eh?"

Barbara changed the subject hastily.

"Do you still send something to the poor on Saint Barbara's eve, Uncle?"

He nodded, "Usually some of the fruit and pastry, since money's so scarce," he explained.

"I'd like to give something. Here." She slipped a bill into his hand.

The little boy was beginning to read. His father interrupted: "Read slowly, my son, and carefully—your cousin Barbara is a college graduate."

Then said a rich man, Speak to us of Giving.

And he answered:

You give but little when you give of your possessions.

It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

*For what are your possessions but things you keep and
guard for fear you may need them tomorrow?*

And what is fear of need but need itself?

*There are those who give little of the much which they
have—and they give it for recognition and their hidden
desire makes their gifts unwholesome.*

And there are those who have little and give it all.

*These are the believers in life and the bounty of life and
their coffer is never empty.*

*It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give un-
asked, through understanding.*

("I did," muttered Barbara, under her breath.)

And to the open-handed the search for one who shall receive is joy greater than giving.

And is there aught you would withhold?

All you have shall some day be given;

Therefore give now, that the season of giving may be yours and not your inheritors'.

You often say, "I would give, but only to the deserving."

And what desert greater shall there be than that which lies in the courage and the confidence, nay the charity, of receiving?

See first that you yourself deserve to be a giver, and an instrument of giving.

The little boy closed the book and sat down, flushed and breathless. The applause was loud and Barbara unfastened the wilted gardenia from her dress and took it to her little cousin. But she was thinking, "I wonder if Uncle did that on purpose." She looked at him through lowered lashes. "But no," she decided, "he is too simple and ingenuous."

It was late when she reached her room and the safe shelter of her own soft bed. But sleep would not come. Pictures of her childhood in Syria floated through her mind in spite of her efforts to shut them out. The old home with its high-ceilinged rooms, and the courtyard in the center. The narrow stairway on the outside, leading up to the roof where the family went on summer nights. From that flat roof the heavens seemed very near; the mystery and the glory of the stars were overwhelming. In the distance were glimpses of the blue waters of the Mediterranean, and looking in the other direction one could see the mountains, snow on their crests, olive orchards clustered at their feet, the cedars of Lebanon growing on

their sides. The smell of the pine trees and the aroma of Turkish coffee made by her mother in the early morning before the household was astir seemed to fill the room in the great noisy city where Barbara Zaloom lay tossing and turning on her comfortable bed. She saw the little girl who was herself, helping to stack the mattresses, which were laid on the floor at night and concealed by a screen during the day. Or she was carrying dough to the village oven, there to be baked in flat discs of Syrian bread. She could see herself bringing water from the fountain in the center of the square, or going to the school taught by French sisters, and to the church whose priest was a dear and honored friend of the family.

Then came the illness which took away her father and mother, and the decision that she, Barbárah, must go to Uncle Anees in America. Eight years old, a little backward Syrian child, speaking only French and Arabic—and how good they had been to her!

The Feast of Saint Barbara had brought it all back. She should never have gone—she had long ago turned away from all such foolish festivals. She was Barbara—American through and through. Not Barbárah, in Syria, celebrating that Saint's day with her brothers in the big house with its high-ceilinged rooms; helping to prepare the wheat which, if the truth must be told, she had never liked; thrilled over the thought of the relatives who would come to sing and play and talk, and of bedtime put off till midnight.

She *must* forget all this and go to sleep. She had a right to live her own life in her own way here in America, but she would remember now to save some of her dresses for little Aniseh.

*You give but little when you give of your possessions.
It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.
And there are those who have little and give it all.*

She had never cared for Kahlil Gibran. Why had little Gibran read that particular section?

If she could only get to sleep and stay asleep until it was too late to attend the early Mass in the Syrian church tomorrow morning, December fourth, Saint Barbara's day——

IV. IN THE CHURCH

She slipped out early the next morning, leaving a note to say that she had an appointment and would have her breakfast outside. What would her American friend think, if she knew that her appointment was with Saint Barbara in the Syrian church? She hoped that she would not be recognized. No amount of rouge and powder could conceal the traces of her sleepless night.

On entering the church she lighted a candle for Saint Barbara and dipped her finger in the cup of oil which held a tiny wick burning in front of the Saint's picture. The oil applied to her red-rimmed, tired eyes seemed to give relief.

Back in her seat she listened as in a dream to the familiar ritual. The special prayers offered by the priest for the Saint martyred so many years ago seemed to have no reality for the modern Barbara sitting exhausted and homesick in an obscure corner of the church.

Then suddenly a voice spoke within her. Conscience, was it?—or Saint Barbara?

"You have been selfish and unkind to those who gave you their protection and love for so many years."

"Oh, no!" she protested. "Only careless and forgetful. And now I am sorry."

"To be sorry is not enough."

"But I mean to do more for them—to see that Aniseh has pretty clothes."

*You give but little when you give of your possessions.
It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.*

"Yes, I believe that. I mean to do better."

"You are ashamed of the Syrian people—of your Syrian name."

"I have been—yes, I've been a snob——"

"You have boasted of your American friends."

"Yes—but now I am homesick for my own people."

"You have deserted your church and the religion of your fathers."

"Oh, *no!* — not *really*. This is where I belong. This is where my heart finds rest. I've come back."

Barbara had slipped to her knees. The tears were coming thick and fast—bitter, repentant tears; healing, cleansing tears.

"Please forgive me," she whispered. "I have been wicked and selfish and self-centered. But everything is different now. I'll go back home to Uncle and Aunt Zaloom. We'll take the larger apartment. I'll help little Aniseh——"

*See first that you yourself deserve to be a giver, and an
instrument of giving.*

"Oh, I shall—indeed I shall."

A shaft of light came through the window and fell full on the pictured face of Saint Barbara. It seemed to that other Barbara that the eyes of the Saint were turned toward her with such love and understanding that all the turmoil and distress in her heart melted away.

She lighted another candle, knelt a moment before the illumined picture, and walked out into the December sunshine toward her uncle's home.

THE SHEPHERDS' CROOKS



SO ABSORBED was he in the writing of his Christmas sermon that the Reverend George Dudley, rector of Holy Trinity Church, was only faintly conscious of a gentle but persistent knocking on his study door. Then the door opened softly and he was aware of a small eager face framed in a mop of light-brown hair. Two earnest blue eyes regarded him inquiringly, hopefully.

His own eyes lighted up and he greeted the little girl joyfully. "Carol! You are a welcome sight. You rejoice my heart, even though you have interrupted a most important sermon!"

"Mother said you'd be busy. But this is important too, Uncle George. I've brought my best friend to see you and I want to show her all the things you brought home from Palestine."

Carol stretched out her hand to another small figure standing in the shadowy hall and pulled her into the cozy study.

Dr. Dudley rose from his chair and bowed to the two girls with an elaborate politeness which all children loved.

"I am honored by this visit from my niece Carol, and her best friend," he said.

"This is Rachel Baba," Carol explained. "Her father is the priest of Saint Mary's Church. You ought to be his friend, but you aren't." He was too surprised to answer this candid statement of his shortcomings, and she continued.

"They have their Christmas pageant next week and I'm going with her and sit with the family in their pew. There will be shepherds, but no manger nor the baby Jesus and his mother. Can you imagine that? And can you imagine Christmas in January?"

He did not answer the question, for he suddenly realized that this small dark-eyed child—Carol's "best friend"—was the daughter of the Assyrian priest, the establishment of whose church some years before had caused much concern to the orthodox and American town of Woodmere. He tried to recall where he had met her father, whose classical features had reminded him of the old Assyrian bas-reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum. But Carol was continuing to explain. "And so I told her about your *real* shepherd's crook—not like the ones they use in her church at Christmas—and how you got it in Palestine from a real shepherd boy who looked just like David. Please, may I show it to Rachel, Uncle George?"

He took the two girls into the room where he kept the treasures brought back from his last memorable visit to Palestine. "You may show her the crook and all the other things, Carol," he said. "I must go back to my sermon."

But the interruption was fatal to sermon writing, for the time being, at least. He recalled now where he had met Rachel's father. It was at a ministers' meeting some time ago. He had resolved then to learn more about the Assyrian Apostolic Church and to show

more friendliness toward this priest who had an air of melancholy and loneliness in spite of his proud bearing.

But the Reverend George Dudley was himself a newcomer to the town of Woodmere and the needs of his own parish kept him fully occupied. His good resolutions had been quite forgotten, and he silently renewed them. Now that his busy holiday season was over he would call upon the priest. Did Carol's mother know, he wondered, that the child's best friend was an Assyrian? Children, of course, know no barriers of race or creed, and he himself had a genuine interest in foreigners and immigrants. But still—he was Carol's pastor as well as her uncle.

He took down a volume from his library shelves and carried it to his study desk. He began to look up items on Mesopotamia and the Assyrians, but his mind wandered to the dark-eyed child in the other room and her priestly father. Moved by a sudden impulse he went back to his youthful visitors, who were already preparing to leave, and spoke gently to the child, whose eyes, like her father's, held a hint of tragedy.

"Will you please tell your father that he is welcome to anything from my Palestinian collection for your Christmas pageant? David's crook—would he not like to borrow that? It has been used in many a Christmas celebration."

He felt better—he had made his first gesture of friendliness. Rachel did not answer, but Carol replied eagerly, "Oh, Uncle George, I'm sure he'd love to have it. Shall I ask him? I'm going home with Rachel now."

He nodded. "Tell him I shall be really hurt if he does not accept." Back in his study he began to read with interest.

"The Assyrian Apostolic Church traces its origin to the Apostle James, and ascribes to him its liturgy, written in ancient Syriac.

"It is also called the Jacobite Church, from a great leader of the sixth century, a monk named James—or Jacob—Bardai. This church was one of those opposing the doctrine adopted by the Council of Chalcedon in 451, that Jesus had two natures.

"For their belief that the human and divine were so united in Jesus as to form but one nature, the Armenian, Jacobite and Coptic Churches were bitterly persecuted. Never a large body, the Jacobites settled in the Euphrates valley, sent out missionaries and established their church. Though anathematized and excommunicated, the mighty spirit of the Gospel, greater than all creeds or sects, worked through them for the extension of the kingdom of God.

"In the Middle Ages they produced a brilliant school of liturgical science. At present the nucleus of the Assyrian people is in and around Mardin, in Turkish territory. There resides their ecclesiastical chief, the Patriarch of Antioch.

"During the World War and afterward, persecutions were renewed. Since 1924, Assyrian refugees have wandered toward Aleppo in Syria. They speak Arabic, which is also used in the church service, though the liturgy is in Syriac. The church is often called the Syrian Orthodox Church, although the Assyrians must not be confused with the Syrians.

"A people without home or country, driven from their village in the hot plains of Mesopotamia, separated from the Nestorian Assyrians by a question of dogma, the Jacobite Assyrians still hold their religion as the dominant factor in their lives. The Aramaic Gospels and great liturgical books sustain their faith, though even in America they are looked upon as unorthodox and heretical. They are loyal Americans, however, but the opportunities of the older generation for acquaintance with native Americans are very limited."

Dr. Dudley closed the book and pondered on what he had just read. Right here in their midst was this ancient church, and how many of his fellow clergymen had taken the trouble to have first-hand knowledge of it? A church which for fifteen centuries had suffered for its belief that the human nature of Christ was overshadowed to such an extent by his divinity that the two were merged into one. Still we label this belief as heresy, while, on the other hand, this church which we call heretical applies that term to its sister Nestorian church for denying to the Virgin Mary the title of "Mother of God." With such divergence of opinion after nearly two thousand years of Christianity will church unity ever be possible? he wondered. Well, he consoled himself, I for one have tried to show friendliness by offering my precious David's crook to the Assyrian priest. Soon I shall call upon him.

Then Carol returned and informed him, rather gleefully he thought, "Father Baba says 'thank you' but he can't use your shepherd's crook."

So his offer of friendliness had been rejected.

"Why not?" he asked, trying to keep his annoyance out of his voice.

"That's a secret—but I know it. And so will you if you'll come to the Christmas service with me. *Please* say you will, Uncle George."

Carol was standing by his chair, her arm around his neck, her blue eyes looking straight into his.

"But, my dear, I couldn't do that, you know. This church, it's not like our church——" Her candid eyes embarrassed him.

"But that doesn't matter, does it?"

"I suppose not. Only"—here was a way out and he seized it—"does your mother not object to your going, Carol?"

"Oh, *no!* She says you preach that we are all children of our Heavenly Father, and these church differences are wrong among Christians."

"You've got me there, Carol! So tell your mother your old bachelor uncle will be your escort next week to the Christmas celebration in the Assyrian Apostolic Church. It's a good thing their Christmas comes thirteen days after ours."

But after Carol left him he regretted his decision. What would his parishioners think? They were very orthodox—very conservative. Well, he would persuade Carol to slip into a back pew and they would leave early. With a sigh he turned back to his waiting Christmas sermon.

The Assyrian church of Saint Mary's was well filled and the service had begun when the Reverend George Dudley and his niece Carol entered. Most of the audience was seated but here and there men and women were standing, obviously engaged in prayer. Dr. Dudley and Carol slipped into a rear seat, but even so, the keen eyes of the tall black-bearded priest espied them and soon they were being ushered to the very front.

Carol entered the Baba pew, pulling her reluctant uncle after her. She sat down beside her friend Rachel and beamed on the entire family. The wife of the priest acknowledged their presence by a slight nod over the heads of the children.

For the first time in his life George Dudley felt embarrassed and ill at ease. Moreover, he was distinctly annoyed. He had definitely planned to arrive late in order to avoid the very thing that was happening.

But aside from a few curious glances his conspicuous entrance seemed to be taken as a matter of course. He must make the best

of the situation, for here he must stay until the three-hour service was ended. He looked around the bare church, surprised at its lack of adornment. He had always supposed the Eastern churches to be very ornate. And there was nothing to indicate Christmas—no wreaths of green, no tree or lighted star, no scene of the nativity. What was all this about shepherds and their crooks which Carol had hinted at so mysteriously?

Carol whispered something and he bent down in order to hear her better. "Mrs. Baba says that it is the story of Christmas that Father Baba is reading from Saint Matthew and Saint Luke. It is in the language that Jesus spoke."

He listened intently to the old Aramaic words. They had a faintly familiar sound. Almost he could follow the well-known passages: "shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night"—"brought forth her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes"—"today is born unto you in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."

The priest closed the book and looked toward his people and his eyes met those of the rector of Holy Trinity sitting with his family in their pew. That look of friendliness went straight to the heart of George Dudley and all his embarrassment and annoyance melted away.

Shame on you, he admonished himself, for being annoyed—first because your precious crook was not accepted for this service, and second because you were made conspicuous when you wanted to sneak in and out unnoticed. You prefer to be the benefactor, rather than the one benefited, and a bit of humbling is very good for you.

They were standing now, and the priest stretched forth his hands to the hands of one of his assistants, who in turn, palm to palm, pressed those of the worshiper nearest him. Throughout the entire

audience this peculiar handclasp was given, and Dr. Dudley turned to watch with puzzled attention this strange ceremony. Carol leaned against him and whispered softly:

"Mrs. Baba says they used to kiss each other—the kiss of peace. But now they do this instead, to show they forgive each other. In every service they do it—not just on Christmas."

Carol smiled up at him happily and slipped her small hand into his. The old ritual continued, intoned from various ancient volumes. How he wished he could follow it. A beam of sunlight came through a pane of red glass in a memorial window and fell on Father Baba, staining his high hat with flaming color. His priestly robe of scarlet and gold gleamed in the shaft of colored light. Then a cloud of incense enveloped him and an outburst of music came from the choir. An air of expectancy ran through the church and Carol gave a little gasp of excitement. She was standing on tiptoe and pointing to the center aisle, where a table was being prepared for some unusual part in the service.

"Look, Uncle George; watch for the shepherds' crooks!"

The priest and his assistants stepped down from before the High Altar and moved slowly through the church, with swinging censers and the chanting of Christmas songs. Following them were several men representing shepherds of Bethlehem, carrying crude staves.

"They pay the church to let them be shepherds," explained Carol, frantically trying to see everything that was going on.

The procession turned and came up the middle aisle, surrounding the table, upon which stood a galvanized tub. The shepherds broke their crooks into small pieces and laid them carefully in the tub. A match was applied and suddenly flames shot upward. Dr. Dudley was startled. For a moment he thought wildly of dashing

with Carol to the nearest exit. Then he realized that it was the high point in the service.

"*This* is the surprise, Uncle George." He could hardly hear Carol's voice, for the congregation was moving into the aisle while the choir sang joyfully an old church hymn.

"It is to keep Mary and the baby warm all through the cold winter night," whispered Carol. The light from the fire lit up her eager face. "Isn't it a wonderful thought, Uncle George? And this is the only church in the world where they do it. But over in Assyria, Father Baba said, the fire is made right on the floor of the church. It is stone, you know, and they don't have any seats. And the people are barefooted because of something said to Moses."

"Yes, it is very wonderful, Carol," he answered her, deeply moved in spite of himself by this strange rite out of the distant past. Primitive Christianity here in the midst of a modern and materialistic age.

The flames died down but the choir sang on. They sang the Christmas songs in Arabic, since they did not know the long-forgotten Aramaic.

The contrast between this American setting and the picture of the celebration across the seas, as his imagination painted it, struck Dr. Dudley painfully. He looked around the plain, unadorned church filled with wooden seats, and the ceremony taking place on a table in the center aisle, and tried to imagine an old stone church in that ancient land beyond the Tigris and Euphrates. He saw the congregation standing where seats were unknown, their feet instead of heads uncovered because of the command to Moses to remove his shoes, "for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." The fire laid on the floor, leaping flames lighting up the dark ecstatic faces of those whose ancestors had once upon a time

come down from the mountains "like a wolf on the fold." And outside, brooding over Christian and heathen alike, the star-filled, mysterious Assyrian sky.

And here in America, in the very community in which he lived, the celebration of this unusual ceremony was being enacted, year after year. He might have missed it had it not been for Carol. He looked around at the devout worshipers in this alien church and suddenly they were not alien, but fellow Christians with whom he was observing the Christmas festival. He, the rector of the Protestant church of the Holy Trinity, was finding it quite possible to worship in this church which was called heretical. Was, in fact, becoming more and more drawn in fellowship and understanding toward the black-bearded priest with the aristocratic face and somber eyes. Together they were celebrating the birth of Him who had said, "I am the Light of the World. He that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness but shall have the light of life." That very morning he had read, "This is the true Light that lighteth every man coming into the world." Who was he to deny that light had come to the Assyrians in the far-off plains of Mesopotamia? In fact, might not their very familiarity with the symbolic language used by Jesus Himself have given them a deeper understanding of his teachings than that possessed by the theologians of the West?

He would lose no time now in seeking out this brother preacher. He would invite him to speak at Holy Trinity. He would— Suddenly he realized that the service was over and he was being greeted with a cordiality that would put many an American church to shame.

The priest stepped down and held out his hand. His golden robe and high hat had been replaced by a lace-trimmed white surplice over a black gown, and a tight-fitting cap.

"I give you welcome, Dr. Dudley, to the Assyrian Apostolic Church," he said. Then he looked down into Carol's dancing blue eyes: "I am sure your uncle is glad now that safe back in his home is his very own shepherd's crook."

THE CHRISTENING



"WELL, Marjorie"—her father surveyed his attractive daughter over the top of the *Sunday Times*—"since your heart is set on going to this Greek christening, and since, as you so often remind me, you are quite capable of looking after yourself, there seems to be nothing for me to do but consent."

"But father," protested Marjorie, "why can't you see it from my point of view? Even if I didn't want to go, it's part of my job as a social worker to know something about the church my families belong to."

"It's not the church I object to." He put down the paper and ran his fingers through his white hair, a characteristic gesture when he was agitated. "I've told you that before, although as an elder in the Presbyterian church this idea of my daughter's frequent visits to a priest is not exactly pleasing."

Marjorie came over to his chair and smoothed down his rumpled hair.

"Daddy dear," she said, "I know you hate to have me go to a party on a Sunday night, in what you call the slums—" She paused a moment, thinking of those four flights of dark stairs which she had climbed so many times during these past months.

He took advantage of the pause. "Indeed I do, and if your mother were at home she'd never consent to it. But more than that, I don't believe in this so-called social work that permits a family on relief to spend money on food and drink and dear knows what else. That's not what I give my contributions for! But we've argued enough. Now run along, but remember that I don't like having you all mixed up with these heathen customs."

"Oh, father! It's because they're *Christians* that they are having the baby christened. If you'd only come with me —" She stooped and kissed him and straightened the glasses on his aristocratic nose. He waved her away with his paper. "Run along and don't forget to leave me the addresses of the places where you are going."

And so Marjorie Ellsworth, one hundred per cent American by birth and education, newest visitor in the Charity Society, set forth alone on a snowy winter evening for the Greek Church of Saint Chrysostem. A few months earlier she would have been more alarmed than was her father over the thought of a visit to a Greek church. The Marjorie Ellsworth starting out on a warm September morning from the comfortable home where she had lived all her life, to begin her career as a social worker, was very different from the Marjorie Ellsworth stepping forth from the same home on an evening in December to attend the christening of Andreas Demas. Then she had been cocksure of herself and of the social work technique which she had striven so earnestly to master. Her diploma hung over the bed in her room, a daily reminder that Marjorie Ells-

worth was now qualified to help solve the problems of the underprivileged.

She had studied carefully the record of the Demas family before she made her first call: Father aged thirty, sullen and secretive; mother, twenty-eight, extravagant; Eudokia aged five, undernourished; and Andreas the baby, who should never have come at all to a family on relief. It was obvious that there were sources of income unreported to the Society and it was rumored that the family patronized a Greek grocery store instead of the one arranged for by the Society, and that they had been seen at the movies—not once but many times.

Added to all these questionable indulgences was the one that Marjorie herself had discovered on that first visit to the family—they were planning to have a big christening celebration for six-months-old Andreas. Mrs. Demas herself had announced this coming event quite frankly when explaining why it was necessary to patronize the Greek grocery store—so much in the way of Greek food would be needed when the baby was christened. Of course the Newest Visitor was horrified. In her very kindest manner she tried to convince Mrs. Demas that a family on relief could not spend money in any such way. But the other only reiterated wearily, "*Must* have christening for baby." She even then and there proceeded to spread a feast for her visitor, of wine and pastry and thick black coffee, which that startled young person refused with firm politeness.

Repeated visits to the Demas family failed to disclose their safely guarded secrets or to change their plans for the christening. And so, in desperation, Marjorie decided to visit Father Demetrios of Saint Chrysostem's Greek Orthodox Church. With what trepidation had she sought him out in the basement of the church, where he had his

office! How did one address a priest? Could he speak English? Would he understand her viewpoint as a social worker or would he inevitably side with the family who were his parishioners?

She found a fine-looking man, with graying hair, pointed black beard and near-sighted, kindly eyes, pounding away on a typewriter.

"I am Father Demetri,"* he said in answer to her question, and drew forward a chair for her. She introduced herself and explained the reason for her visit.

Soon she found herself sipping Turkish coffee from a fragile cup—it had appeared suddenly, brought on a brass tray by his assistant—and talking freely and frankly to this courteous man, whose slim hand held his coffee cup in a firm grasp and whose eyes twinkled reassuringly as she presented the case of the Demas family. How understanding he was, how helpful!

The visits which followed were at his home, over the Greek school next door, where his lovely wife served the inevitable Turkish coffee and delicious Greek pastry which she herself had made. One by one the secrets of the Demas family had been revealed. The extra money which they evidently had? Mr. Demas had been gambling. Gambling! Yes, in a Greek coffee shop where he went because he had nothing else to do. Quite common, alas! among our Greek young men. But he had promised to give it up and would keep his promise.

The movies? Well—they knew the owner of the movie house and he sent them tickets. As simple as that.

The cause of Eudokia's paleness and listlessness? The milk the Society provided for her was being given to the sick woman next

* Familiar shortened form of the Greek name.

door. But how could Mrs. Demas deprive her own child? Because the woman next door would die without the milk.

When it came to the christening, that was another matter. Never would Marjorie forget their conversations on that subject. As far as the expense was concerned, the ceremony in the church would cost the family nothing. Father Demetri would see to that. As to the feast in the home, the men in the Greek coffee shop had already taken up a collection to cover the cost of the food, which Mr. Demas himself would prepare—he was a good cook. And of course the new clothing which the baby must have would be provided by the godparents.

"So that's that," Marjorie had said flippantly, and, "So that's that," he had replied, a little twinkle in his black eyes.

"But," he had continued soberly, "I want to show you what a christening means to a Greek—to anyone born into the Greek Orthodox Church. This is his entrance into the household of faith. When the child is baptized he becomes a child of God. Without baptism no one can enter the Kingdom of God—is it not so in your church?"

"I guess so—I don't know," Marjorie had stammered.

"Of course the baptism is by immersion only—three times the child is immersed—buried. It is a long ceremony. If you are interested I should like to explain it all to you some other time. And it would mean a great deal to the family if you would come to the church, and afterward to the home. For of course there is great rejoicing when a soul is born into the Kingdom of God. After this is over, the task for you, my child, is to find work for Mr. Demas and to continue to be a kind friend to all of them."

Thus it came about that a very different Marjorie was on her way to the christening which she had tried so hard to prevent. Her mis-

take had chastened her spirit. Contacts with a young woman not much older than herself, of a different nationality, background, manner of life and thought, had widened her horizon. And the understanding friendliness of a priest in a great church of whose existence she had been hardly aware had opened to her a whole new world. Greek thought and culture and custom which somehow she had missed in her college courses in Ancient Greek literature and art had suddenly come alive.

The wife of Father Demetri was waiting for her at the church door. "I stay with you, for I have a fear you not feel good with so many Greek people. And perhaps I may tell you in English some of the Greek words."

Marjorie clasped the outstretched hand gratefully and they entered into the church proper, with its vivid Byzantine icons and paintings, and stood very close to the baptismal font. Other friends of the family assembled slowly, and then the priest appeared with several assistants. He was in a gorgeous robe, gold-embroidered, his head bare, his whole appearance so regal that Marjorie found it hard to visualize the friendly man pounding away on an old typewriter in the dark basement of this same colorful church.

Young Andreas Demas was brought in, wrapped in blankets and held awkwardly in the arms of an embarrassed young man. He looked about wildly in search of a familiar face. His mother hovered, with anxious and tear-filled eyes, in a far corner. By right she was not supposed to be there at all. His father was at home preparing the feast for twenty-five or more guests. The baby's frightened eyes fell at last upon Marjorie, and he held out his little bare arms to her with a pathetic whimper.

During the entire service she stood as close as possible to small Andreas, recalling with a smile how she had tried to be his god-

mother, for in the enthusiasm of her changed point of view regarding the christening, she had offered herself as a co-parent, in order to provide the clothing which the godfather chosen by the family could not afford. Very gently Father Demetri had enlightened her ignorance. The godparents assume a relationship as binding as a blood relationship. The church does not allow a non-orthodox person to act as godparent; the responsibility for the child accepted by the godparent lasts through life.

"But," he had added, noting her disappointment, "it is quite all right for you to provide the clothing, if you wish to do so." She had ten dollars left from her last salary check; she could not ask her father for money for the baby's christening clothes. What could she dispense with in order to buy them herself? The new silk blouse which she had needed to brighten up her old tweed suit? Or the shoes to replace those worn thin by long walks through shabby streets and up and down long flights of stairs? Or the opera tickets she had been saving for, for so long? Oh—that was it—she must give up the opera, the one luxury upon which her heart was set. For had she not been trying to convince a dark-eyed Greek girl that luxuries were wrong?

And now the pretty new baby things were in an anteroom of the church and small Andreas was stretching out his arms to her as though he recognized her as a real godparent after all. It was very cold in the church. Marjorie drew the fur collar of her coat tight around her throat. She looked anxiously at the whimpering baby and leaned over to tuck his little wavering hands inside his blanket. She caught the look of approval from that resplendent figure who was Father Demetrios. Then she watched, with fascinated eyes, the elaborate ceremony which had previously been explained to her.

The priest stooped over the child and breathed three times, made

the sign of the cross on its brow and chest, put his hand on the curly head and prayed. His wife, standing next to Marjorie, whispered the translation of the Greek words: "That the baby may be with faith, hope and love filled up, and that in the book of life his name may be written down. And then that evil be put out of his mind and heart." (Poor little wicked Andreas! thought Marjorie irreverently.) Now all turned to the west, from whence come darkness and Satan, and Satan was denounced. Then to the east, and the desire to unite with Christ was affirmed. The priest withdrew, and lighted tapers were given to all, including the godfather.

Marjorie caught a glimpse of Mrs. Demas' anxious face on the edge of the little circle of friends. I know this symbolizes the spiritual light that we all need, and that the Greeks call baptism, *illumination*—but I hope, and I'm sure Mrs. Demas must too, that the hot wax won't drip down on top of the poor baby, thought Marjorie. She gave a sigh of relief when the priest returned. This time he was all in white and enveloped in incense—the grace of the Holy Spirit—from a swinging censer. He took precious oil, brought from Constantinople, and anointed the baptismal water. Then the child was anointed for burial—his brow, ears, breast, between the shoulders, his hands and feet. Taken from his protecting blankets, he was completely immersed—once, twice, three times. Marjorie gave an audible gasp as the indignant and protesting cries of the baby echoed through the half-empty church and almost drowned out the voice of the priest. To poor little Andreas, stripped of his clothing, passed through the unaccustomed hands of men folk, and dipped shivering and helpless in water that almost choked him, the celebration of his christening was anything but a joyful occasion.

He was carried dripping and screaming to the small anteroom, where he was dressed in the soft new garments that Marjorie her-

self had provided. When he was brought back by his godfather his sobs had ceased and he submitted resignedly to the shaving of a lock of hair from the back of his little nodding head. A small gold cross was fastened to his dress and he was given the communion. Andreas Demas was now a child of God, a member of the household of faith, with Saint Andreas, apostle and saint in heaven, to be the guardian of his body and soul through life. And now priest and guests went to the humble home of the Demas family to rejoice with them over this great event in the life of their small son. As Marjorie climbed the familiar stairs she thought how this was the climax of all her previous visits—a climax for herself as well as for her Greek friends.

She was greeted with much friendliness and cordiality, the only American and rather at a loss among so many Greeks. The little apartment was shining with cleanliness and fragrant with cut flowers. Mrs. Demas answered the question in her eyes. "All presents. Many Greeks have flower stores, you know. All from our friends."

"I can stay only a little while—it is so late," Marjorie explained. "But I'd like to hold the baby. May I have him?" They found her a chair in a corner of the small crowded living room and put the baby in her arms. He leaned back against her with a contented sigh and she kissed the curls on the top of his head and wished with all her heart that he belonged to her.

From where she sat she could see the kitchen and the frantic preparations taking place there for the serving of much food to many people—that same kitchen where she had sat with Mrs. Demas on her first visit and made her first mistake, in refusing the refreshments offered to her. She would never forget what Father Demetri had said as she sipped the coffee he offered her in the

basement of the church and told him how wrong it was for people on relief to offer refreshments to their visitors. "I hope you think I was right to refuse?" she had questioned.

"Do you think it was right to quench a generous spirit by refusing to accept hospitality?"

"When you put it that way, perhaps not," she had answered reluctantly, "but they were luxuries that Mrs. Demas offered. And I told her the truth when I told her that I do not drink coffee." He had taken her up at once on that:

"But you are drinking mine, right now."

"It would have been rude not to."

"Then, my child, you were rude to Mrs. Demas."

"But Father Demetri, this is quite different!"

He had shaken his head and answered rather slowly, "No, not so different. That is what I want you to see. If we take away all the little gracious acts from poverty-stricken people we make them little better than the beasts."

"But they are using for luxuries money given them for something else. They are extravagant. Why, they even have a dog and a radio!" How stubborn she had been.

And how patient his answer: "Yes, left over from more prosperous days, as probably were the refreshments offered you. They have been on relief only a short time, you know. These material things were the symbol of an inner grace. Hospitality is of the spirit. We can encourage it only by partaking of it." And that was only three months ago. How much he had taught her since then.

As if in answer to her thoughts, Father Demetrios was pushing through the crowd to where she was sitting. "Your father is here, Miss Ellsworth; he has come to take you home."

"Father? Why, of all things!" She rose hastily and handed the baby to the young godfather.

Father Demetrios followed her into the other room. "I shall talk to him while you get your wraps; you need not hurry." He smiled reassuringly into her startled face.

When she came out of the bedroom, ready for the trip home, she saw them standing together just inside the living room. Her father's hat and coat had disappeared, his distinguished white head was bent toward the black-bearded priest, who was talking earnestly. A little space had been cleared, and two chairs and a table placed in front of them. Marjorie was quite speechless when she reached them. Her father explained seriously:

"Mr.—ah—I mean Father, has explained that it would be a great discourtesy for me to take you away before the refreshments, so I am staying a little while." She caught the twinkle in the priest's eyes and hastily left the two men to continue their conversation.

The food was bountiful and delicious, and was followed by singing and much noisy conversation. The young people would have danced, but the tiny rooms were too crowded. Suddenly Marjorie was very tired; she wanted to go home. It was wonderful to have father here, but what *could* he be talking about all this time? Did he realize that it was three o'clock in the morning?

All things come to an end, and at last good-byes had been said and they were in the taxi going home. "Well, Marjorie, I surprised the little social worker—eh?"

"Indeed you did!" Marjorie yawned sleepily. "What *were* you talking about so long with Father Demetri?"

"About our coins. He's quite a collector too. A real numismatist, I should guess—that's a Greek word, by the way. He has some very rare coins from ancient Greece. He's going to bring them around

to the house sometime. I asked him to come with his wife to dinner. Your mother will invite them when she gets home."

"Why Daddy Ellsworth!" His daughter was no longer sleepy. "That's the most wonderful thing I ever heard of."

"Now it's nothing to get excited over! He's very interesting, that chap, if he *is* a priest. And he said they'd never once been invited to an American home. What do you think of that?"

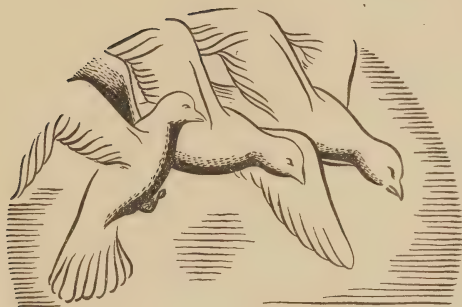
"I think I'll never forget this night as long as I live. And did you think Mr. Demas was interesting too? I saw you talking to him."

"I was very well impressed with the young man. And I hope I've started him toward a job. One of the elevator men in our building has just been promoted and I gave this Demas chap a note to the superintendent."

Marjorie put her head down on her father's shoulder and gave a great sigh.

"Daddy Ellsworth," she said, "I'm never going to get married because there's no man on earth as grand as you are. And anyway, I never want to stop being a social worker. It's the most thrilling occupation in the world."

THE SIGN



I

IT WAS VERY quiet in the little kitchen, and Kanella Paulos and her mother were free at last to sew and plan and visit, without fear of interruption, for the children were in bed and Mr. Paulos was at the church helping to clear up after a wedding. Tomorrow was Sunday and they could all sleep late.

Kanella was always happy on the rare occasions when she and her mother were alone together; her mother was so understanding and usually had some solution for problems that even Stephan couldn't solve.

Together they spread out on the table several yards of pale green silk and Kanella watched anxiously while her mother placed a paper pattern this way and that over the shimmering surface.

"Yes," Mrs. Paulos said at last, "there is enough for a nice dress and I'll embroider the neck and armholes and it will look like from

Paris."

"Oh, mother, you're a darling! And when I have your old wedding slippers all gilded, they will be like new."

Her mother sighed. "I have save them all these years for you to marry in. They were once so beautiful. But it is long time till we have your wedding."

"Maybe not, mother." Kanella held up a slipper for inspection. "I never dreamed I'd go to a ball—and now I'm really going, in gold slippers and a hand-embroidered dress from Paris and a diamond circlet for my hair! So perhaps the wedding will come next."

She placed the slipper on the kitchen sink, and standing before a small mirror fastened a glittering circlet in her curly hair.

"Ten cents for my diamond tiara, ten cents for gold paint for the slippers, and two dollars for my Paris gown—total, two-twenty," sang Kanella gaily, smiling back at the enchanting image in the glass.

"Well—it is a very pretty ornament, even if it cost only ten cents." Mrs. Paulos' busy fingers paused a moment and she looked at her slim young daughter with admiring eyes.

"It reminds me of the time I worked in a factory putting glass stones in combs for the hair. Little holes were in the combs and we made the stones hot and make them go in the holes and when I first try I am burned badly."

Kanella turned from the mirror and began to gild the other slipper.

"I can't imagine you working in a factory, mother."

"Well, Greek girls never work but stay in the home, when I was your age. But the factory was near where we live—just a room and twelve girls working. I not like to be alone all day, and I want a beautiful summer fur I see in the store and so I go to factory and

I never tell my brother what I do."

"Mother! How wicked of you!" laughed her daughter.

Mrs. Paulos drew a chair nearer to the light and began the fine embroidery around the neck of the dress.

"But so much I did want that fur."

"And did you get it?" Kanella suddenly saw her mother in a new light. Young, pretty, living with Uncle Nicholas, who was a dim, happy memory of Kanella's childhood, and longing for a fur piece as her daughter now longed for a new winter coat.

Mrs. Paulos shook her head. "No, because I did not stay very long. It was not as I thought it would be in the factory. I was the only Greek girl. And Brother Nicholas your father had found for my husband."

That part of her mother's story Kanella had heard many times, and how her father was finally taken into partnership in the candy shop where he had been a clerk. But they had lost the shop, and now Mr. Paulos could find only odd jobs to do at the church. Kanella herself earned only fifteen dollars a week and they were behind with the rent. Just that week the nicest boy in the world, who seldom had any fun because he must care for his sick mother, had had two tickets given him for the Greek ball—the ball for the benefit of widows and orphans—at the Hotel Astor. Of course he had invited Kanella to go with him—Kanella who had never been to a ball in her life, and who had just two dollars and twenty cents to spend for a party dress. That two dollars and twenty cents she had saved, by going without lunch for two whole weeks, toward a new coat to replace the old one which wasn't fit to wear even to work.

It was long after midnight when the shimmering frock was put back into the box and the slippers hidden on a high shelf out of

reach of sister Stella's prying fingers. Kanella turned toward the small, cold bedroom, glad at last to crawl in beside her sleeping sister.

"Wait a minute, Kanella."

Mrs. Paulos opened a worn pocketbook and took out twenty-five dollars, mostly in one-dollar bills.

"I've been thinking. You need a coat more than Mr. Reilly need the rent money."

"Oh, no, mother!" Kanella put out a protesting hand. The thought of her shabby coat over the lovely dress was almost unendurable, but to use the rent money was out of the question. "When we owe him one hundred dollars, and it has taken weeks to save this and you *promised* he could have it on Monday night!"

"We maybe give him half and buy for ten, twelve dollars a coat for you."

Kanella pushed the money into the kitchen drawer. "No," she said; "I'd rather wait, and pay twenty-five dollars for a good coat. My old one won't be noticed on a Saturday night. It will be checked and——"

"Yes—with all beautiful velvet and fur it will be checked—and by a mean girl who talks mean things about you!"

Her mother's words gave Kanella a picture of herself surrounded by expensive evening wraps, and Stephan handing that awful old coat to the check girl. She musn't disgrace Stephan, who was proud and wouldn't always be poor.

And so she wavered, looking at her mother soberly. Then a light broke over her face.

"Mother! I've thought of something. Tomorrow in church we'll pray *hard* and ask God to send a sign if I'm to spend the money for the coat."

Her mother looked doubtful.

"What kind of sign?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't know—we'll have to leave that to God. Perhaps Mr. Reilly will say he doesn't need the money just now. Perhaps father will earn a lot extra tonight, at the wedding. Perhaps—but anyway we'll pray, won't we, mother, for a real plain sign. It does seem as though God would let me have a coat, when I already have the dress and slippers."

II

Then suddenly, unexpectedly, miraculously the prayer was answered. For on Monday, as she came back to the office after swallowing a cup of coffee in Woolworth's, Kanella found a black velvet bag half-hidden in some dirty snow near the curb, and in it ten five-dollar bills, and not another thing. Enough for the coat and a month's rent also! Kanella wanted to cry and laugh all at once and could hardly wait till five o'clock when she hurried home and caught her mother around the waist and whirled her about the kitchen until they were both quite dizzy.

Then, because father and the children were still at the Greek school and they were alone, they spread out the bills and gloated over them like two misers.

"I'm almost as glad to have twenty-five dollars more for Mr. Reilly as I am for *my* twenty-five," exulted Kanella. "He has been so good to us and waited so long. I couldn't have taken his rent money for my coat, mother."

She counted out five of the bills. "Here, put them with the rest of the rent money. Now we're only fifty dollars behind. Won't he be surprised when he comes tonight?"

But a shadow had come over her mother's face. "Wait, Kanella;

we must not to spend the money yet. Maybe the one who lost it put ad in the paper. Every day we must look at the lost ads. Perhaps some poor person lost it and then we cannot to keep it."

"Oh, mother! It was an answer to my prayer. It belonged to some rich person who doesn't need it. You can tell by the bag."

"Perhaps, Kanella; but we must to be sure. We must to wait a few days. The ball will not be till Saturday night. You can buy the coat in the afternoon."

"But the store is open tonight, and just the coat I want is in the window. Stephan is coming soon and I want him to go with me to get it."

Kanella's eyes were full of tears and her mother answered her very gently but positively.

"We must not to spend the money until we know it is ours—until we are *sure*."

"But how can we be *more* sure?" The tears were spilling over now. "I need the coat so terribly; I ask God to show me shall I take the rent money; He sends this beautiful bag, with all this money and no name, so I *can't* return it."

"Yes, Kanella, that way it does look, but Saturday is soon here and still there is time for the coat. It is a great pain to have money that is not your own. I never tell you why I leave the factory where I work for that summer fur."

"Why?" asked Kanella, surprised at the emotion in her mother's voice.

"The forelady have lost her pocketbook and she find it with my things. They all know I want that fur, and I have to leave the factory like a thief."

"Oh, poor mother! And then?"

"And then the girl who did it for meanness made confession.

She had a hate for foreigners. It was very terrible for me and for Brother Nicholas. So then he find me a husband."

Again Kanella saw her mother in a new light.

"Of course I'll wait till Saturday," she agreed, and hearing the children mounting the stairs, hastened to get ready the supper of steaming hot *pilaf* and thick sour milk.

Her decision to wait was reinforced by Stephan, but he could see no harm in going with her to *look* at the coat, and when she tried it on and her wistful face smiled up at him over the wide fur collar, he almost decided to buy it for her himself, instead of paying the doctor who was caring for his sick mother.

"I'm taking my noon hour to go to church on Thursday," she told him as he walked home with her from the store. "Perhaps God will send me another sign because it's Epiphany."

"I wish I could go with you, but no such luck. A year ago mother was in the hospital, and I couldn't leave her. But two years ago I was in Tarpon Springs, in Florida, for Epiphany. It was great! I'll never forget it."

"Tell me about it, Stevie."

"Well, you know I went down there because my cousin thought he could get me a job. He's one of the sponge fishers—there's about a thousand of them at Tarpon Springs—all Greeks. But somehow I didn't seem to make a go of it. Anyway, I was there at Epiphany time. They have a great celebration, and people come from all over, *hundreds* of them. The streets are all decorated and there are banners everywhere showing the baptism of Christ. The service begins at daylight, in the little church, and the great Archbishop comes from Astoria to lead the procession. He wears his mitre with all the jewels in it and his robe has little bells all around it, and he has a silver staff, and the bishops and visitors and others all march with

him right to the edge of the water."

"Oh, yes," broke in Kanella breathlessly, "just like they do in Constantinople. I've heard my father tell about when he was a boy—how they spent the night before Epiphany trying to drive away the evil spirits who had been let loose after Christmas, and then early in the morning everyone went to the sea for the blessing of the waters."

"Yes," agreed Stephan, "it's too bad we have to have it all inside the church here. There *is* a church in New York that has the ceremony at the Battery, but of course it's terribly cold. It's so much more wonderful out of doors. And there in Florida were the priests and the choir and the order of Ahepa in their fezzes, all on the shore, and out in the harbor the fishing boats with their colored sails and——"

"Oh, Stephan," said Kanella breathlessly, "I *wish* I could see it! And when the Bishop throws the gold cross way out into the water, the boys dive from the little boats and try to find it, don't they?"

"Yes, Kanella, and don't forget the dove—the beautiful white dove is released, just before the cross is thrown into the water."

"That would be the most wonderful of all, I think, Stephan. But why do we have *three* doves in church?"

"Because they represent the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit," he told her.

"Tell me, Stephan, did you dive after the cross, too?"

"Yes, but of course I didn't find it. I didn't need to, for *my* good luck was waiting for me here. When I came home I found *you*."

Kanella shut her eyes and sighed happily. What a wonderful world it was, and on Saturday Stephan would take her to the ball.

He left her at the door and she ran upstairs to help the children with their lessons for the Greek school.

By Wednesday the dainty dress was finished and spread out on the couch with the gilded slippers and the sparkling circlet and a pair of new silk stockings, an unexpected gift from her father. He would have many duties at the church on Thursday, for the service began at nine-thirty in the morning and lasted till two o'clock. And extra duties meant extra earnings. Kanella hugged him rapturously, exclaiming: "It's just like a trousseau, isn't it? And *of course* I'll have the coat to make it complete."

The next morning seemed like any other morning to little Greek Kanella, except that it was January sixth, Epiphany, the day when her church would celebrate the appearance (epiphany) of Christ to John, at his baptism, as other churches were celebrating his appearance to the Wise Men.

She was alone in the dressing room at the office just before noon. She unpinned the little bag from inside her blouse to look once more at the precious contents. Every day she had faithfully scanned the "Lost and Found" column of the paper—Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday—but no one was seeking to recover a velvet bag and ten five-dollar bills. A lumpy place in the lining caught her attention and she tried to smooth it out. Then a thread of yellow silk appeared and she pulled out a little tag of black silk embroidered with gold letters—they looked like a name and an address. Kanella's eyes blurred. She waited a moment and looked again. There was no doubt about it—a name and address were embroidered on the tag.

She thrust the tag back with the money, and fastened the bag inside her dress once more. She felt stunned and bewildered as she put on her shabby coat and beret and started to walk the few blocks to the Greek church.

She tried to think clearly, but her one thought was just a cry—"God didn't send it to me. It wasn't a sign, after all!"

Soon other thoughts came, and she clung to them blindly, tenaciously: "But the money is mine, *anyway*. This person is some rich American who doesn't want it, for she hasn't advertised for it. It's mine. I found it. I need it. I'm not taking it all for myself—I'm giving half to Mr. Reilly for rent. Why shouldn't I have the coat? I've worn the old one for years. I've worked and worked and given all my money to mother. I won't tell her I found the address. And I shall keep the money. It's mine."

The little church was packed. The service would soon culminate in the high point in the ritual, when the cross is dipped in the basin of holy water and the doves are released. Kanella paused a moment to buy a small candle in memory of Uncle Nicholas. Her rebellious mood fell away as she dropped a coin into the silver plate and set the lighted candle beside the others in the long rack just inside the door. She pressed her lips to the picture of the Christ standing in the waters of the Jordan, and then pushed through the crowd to a pillar near the special altar in the center of the church. Behind this Altar of the Baptism, through the door of the elaborately decorated screen, she could see the High Altar, blazing with its golden furnishings and candles.

The priest stood on the little platform containing a basin of holy water rimmed around with green branches, a reminder of the bank of the Jordan. Above it was a very precious icon depicting the baptism, above that a white dove with outspread wings.

The red robe of the priest, stiff with gold embroidery, gleamed like a jewel in the light of many candles. He held the heavy Bible above the heads of his assistants and chanted the account of the baptism from the Gospels. His head was uncovered, and as he

turned toward the people he removed his glasses for a moment. It seemed to Kanella that his glance pierced to her very soul. His words came to her through the heavy incense and the blinding lights as from a distant world:

"And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the Heavens opened and the spirit like a dove descending upon Him.

"And there came a voice from Heaven saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

In lieu of an olive branch the priest dipped a small bouquet of flowers into the basin, and turning from one side of the church to the other, he sprinkled the people with the water which he had blessed. A murmur ran through the waiting throng and they lifted their eyes to the space above the High Altar. A moment of tense expectation, and then a dove fluttered up to the ceiling of the small dome, failed to find a resting place, and at last settled on the top of the screen, between two brass oil lamps. A sigh of relief swept the crowd. The dove was safe.

A second dove was released, and flew distractedly over the heads of the worshipers before it found refuge on a cornice in the big dome overhead.

The third dove flew back and forth, striking the glass pendants in the great chandelier, vainly trying to find a foothold, then whirled in bewildered circles down past the American and Greek flags which decorated a projection near the screen, past the candle flames and the upturned faces of the tense multitude, and came to rest on the shoulder of the startled and shrinking Kanella. Again a sigh of relief swept through the worshipers and the last chant of the service continued without interruption to the end.

Kanella, the bird clinging to her shoulder, slipped behind the pillar, her eyes wide with alarm. For this was the symbol of God

Himself, and against her beating heart a little velvet bag seemed to sear the very flesh.

The people pressed forward toward the Altar of the Baptism and the sexton caught up the bird from Kanella's shoulder.

"A good omen, my child," he said, smiling reassuringly into her frightened eyes. "Have you a bottle for the holy water?"

"My mother will bring some home," she replied, hurrying to the street and the fresh, reviving air of out-of-doors. She stopped to buy a roll from the old woman at the entrance and ate it as she walked back to the office, for she was faint and hungry and there was a heavy load resting on her heart.

III

All that afternoon of January sixth Kanella worked at her typewriter mechanically, conscious only of a name in yellow letters and a task to be accomplished as soon as possible.

When she reached home her father was sprinkling the rooms with the holy water and her mother was dropping unsweetened bread, twisted into fantastic shapes, into boiling oil. Kanella loved the *teganites* which her mother always made for Christmas and Epiphany. But tonight she was glad of them only because her mother was too occupied to notice her.

"We saw you across the church, Kanella," her father said, "and the dove. Didn't it scare you when it flew right down on your head?"

The children laughed gleefully and Kanella tried to join in. "Yes," she said, "it did scare me at first, but the poor little dove was scared too."

Stephan came, and as they went out together her mother gave her a little reassuring pat.

"Two days only, and then you go buy the coat."

But Stephan had to know, for she needed his help. She told her little tale bravely and ended with a question: "And so, will you help me to find this address?" Stephan put his arm about her, right there in front of a lighted store window.

"Of course I will. And I bet she'll be a millionaire and will give the money right back to you. Anyway, I think you're the grandest girl I ever knew and——"

"Oh, but I'm not," Kanella protested with a little catch in her throat. "I'm no better than a thief! I had decided to keep that money no matter *who* it belonged to."

"Stop!" he ordered. "I won't listen. And I don't mind this old coat one little bit. In fact, I *like* it."

"Oh, Stephan! don't be ridiculous."

"But I do," he insisted. "It means unselfishness and generosity and—why, it means *you*, Kanella."

She laughed at that. "You mean to be complimentary, but don't tell me this horrid old coat means *me*, Stephan."

They found a shabby brick house, on a shabby street. After a long time the door was opened by a shabby little woman with red-rimmed eyes.

When Kanella explained their errand she took them to her dark, musty parlor and put her hand to her face to hide the tears.

"It is the last payment on my insurance policy, and tomorrow is the last day to pay it. I have no other way to meet that payment. I have prayed that the money might be found by an honest person. How can I thank you? I have no money left. I cannot give a reward."

"I don't *want* a reward," said Kanella, and meant it. The faded eyes looked longingly into the sparkling blue ones and the fum-

bling fingers drew out the money, and then held out the little velvet bag.

"But I would like to give you this. It was made to match my opera cape when I was a girl like you. I carried a lace-trimmed handkerchief in it. Could you find any use for it?"

"Why, yes," said Kanella. "I could take it to the ball on Saturday night and carry *my* handkerchief in it—and my compact."

"You go to a ball on Saturday night—with this good-looking young man?" There was interest and excitement in the old voice.

"Yes—my very first ball."

"Then wait a few minutes, my dear."

When she returned she carried a package in her hand—something obviously very precious, wrapped in tissue paper.

"It is my opera cape. Will you accept it and wear it to the ball? I shall never need it again. It belongs to a time long past. I think I have saved it for you."

She shook out the velvet folds and Kanella rose and slipped off the old coat and stood in all her sweet youth and slimness while trembling fingers fastened the clasp under her chin and drew the little shirred hood up over her fair hair.

"It is *beautiful*," she cried. "The loveliest thing I ever had in all my life. Oh—I thank you!"

As they walked to the subway, Kanella looked up at the stars shining so far overhead and voiced the thought that was in Stephan's mind also. "God did send me the sign, after all."

DEPART IN PEACE



THAT winter when she was twenty had been full of problems for Olga Chernoff. She had had to face more perplexing situations and make more important decisions than in all the previous years of her life.

First there was Alexis whom she had promised to marry on the twenty-first day of April and who would not release her from her promise, in spite of the fact that she had not realized that the twenty-first of April was Good Friday in the Russian Orthodox Church. Then there was Elena Petrovna. Elena Petrovna was Olga's mother whom she loved with all her heart—almost as much as she loved Alexis. A beautiful, tragic mother with lovely skin and hair and slim, aristocratic hands, who had overcome difficulties and solved problems as far back as Olga could remember, but was now herself a problem. For she was insisting with increasing firmness that, much as she liked Alexis Markovich, she would *never* accept him as a son-in-law.

And last, but by no means least, there was her church which she must give up if she married Alexis: the church into which she had been born and which, for her mother, had taken the place of all she had lost in Russia. This lovely church with its round domes, its lights and incense, its gorgeously-robed priest, its painted saints and apostles, its old ritual and famous choir, must be exchanged for a simple little American church in the country.

Two years before, Alex Marks, who was really Alexis Markovich, and Olga Chernoff had met at night school. Olga had put aside her long-cherished dream of going to an agricultural college and to please her mother was taking a course in economics. Already she had a position, but tapping away on a typewriter day after day seemed the height of drudgery for one who longed for the great open spaces. The parents of Alex were Russian born and bred. His father owned a farm in Connecticut, but Alex planned to follow the trade of his uncle who was a cabinet maker, and with whom he lived while studying in New York. Then suddenly his father died and he was needed at home on the farm. There were two young sisters and a brother to be educated and his mother could not get along without him. He and Olga were engaged when Alex went back to the farm. Elena Petrovna had given in at last, in the belief that by the time Alex was established as a cabinet maker, her daughter's affections would be transferred to someone more desirable. But when Alex took up farming, she insisted that the engagement be broken. For the first time in her life, Olga stood out against her mother. She even maintained her right to frequent visits to the farm where the warm-hearted mother of Alex gave her a royal welcome.

For Olga was enchanted with the farm and the family, especially the old mother, typically Russian, typically peasant. The house was

almost modern and very comfortable, and the few Russian touches added a warmth and charm that Olga was quick to recognize. A lovely old samovar was in daily use, woven curtains and table covers displayed beautiful cross-stitch designs and in a corner of the east wall were two icons which showed a workmanship unknown to modern artists.

The life on the farm fascinated the city-bred girl, who realized how much she had missed that she had always longed for. In the beginning she tried to take her mother with her, but Elena Petrovna stubbornly refused to have anything to do with the farm and waited grimly for the time to come when her daughter would see the error of her ways.

In the meantime, Alex had started work on a little house of their own. The farmhouse was too crowded for more than one family, but the new house would be far enough along by spring for them to move into it. Therefore he urged Olga to set the date for their marriage. For Alex very much feared the influence of that lovely lady, Elena Petrovna, on the girl whom he loved. And so, after much indecision and changing of mind, Olga said, "All right. It shall be the twenty-first of April, and at the Episcopal rectory, as you wish," quite unaware at the time that the twenty-first of April was Good Friday in the Russian Church, where no weddings could take place during the whole of Lent. A marriage on that day would be considered by some Russians as no marriage at all. When this dreadful mistake was discovered, Alexis showed that he too could be stubborn and unrelenting if the occasion required, and refused to change. During the latter part of that hard winter this secret from her mother took away most of the joy of Olga's approaching marriage. And yet she felt that Alex was right in maintaining that as long as she was going against her mother's wishes by marrying she

might just as well make it plain that she was, at the same time, giving up the church of her forefathers.

As for the church problem, Olga really had no choice in the matter if she married Alex and went to live on the farm. There was no Russian or Eastern Orthodox Church within reach, and the Markovich children had always gone to the Episcopal Sunday school and Alex was a member of that church. He had a fine tenor voice and sang in the choir, and the rector was one of his personal friends.

But his parents, like Elena Petrovna, could not find happiness in any church but their own, consequently, when they bought the farm they gave up going to church altogether. Alex had given much time and thought to the matter of creed and theological statements, and although wholly Episcopalian, taught Olga more about the Eastern Orthodox Church than she had ever known before.

"Russia has had Christianity only about one thousand years," he told her. "It was Prince Vladimir whose mother, same name as yours, Olga, studied and was baptized in Constantinople—it was her son Vladimir who made Kiev the center of Christianity in Russia. The Canterbury of Russia, you might say. The people were pagans, of course, and much of their superstition has continued, but art and culture followed the coming of Christianity.

"Then in the thirteenth century came Ghengis Khan and all Europe was overrun by Mongols. Russia went back into the Dark Ages and was still there when in Italy were Dante, Saint Francis, Fra Angelico, Giotto. But one good thing happened to Russia when Constantinople fell in 1453, for after that Moscow became the seat of the Patriarchate. Following this there was a real Russian Empire and the church became the chief institution of the nation—but it was a church of relics and miracle-working icons with the Czar at the head——"

"But *we* don't believe the icons work miracles!" Olga was indignant.

"No, but the peasants believed anything. They could not understand the Slavonic dialect of the ritual, and the ceremonial part of the service was above everything else."

"How *do* you know so much, Alex?"

They were sitting in front of the stove in the big kitchen at the farm. The children had gone to bed and there were no sounds in that quiet room but the ticking of the clock and the loud purring of the tabby cat curled up on Olga's lap.

Alex leaned forward and looked into her earnest blue eyes.

"I never told you that I thought once I'd like to go into the church—the Protestant church, I mean. I began to read up on all this old history. And after awhile I decided I wasn't cut out to be a clergyman after all. But as far as the Russian Church is concerned, *you* know how it lived on the very life-blood of the people—in Russia, I mean. It couldn't go on like that, there had to come a change. But I don't blame our parents for sticking to that old church." He glanced at his mother, dozing in a corner of the room, the precious icons hanging just over her bowed head.

"I can understand how they feel. But you and I are Americans. There's no reason why you shouldn't feel at home in the Episcopal Church, Olga. As far as the fundamentals of Christianity are concerned we really all believe much the same—Protestants and Eastern Orthodox, even Roman Catholics. And that doesn't mean that we can't go to the Russian church whenever we're in the city. I don't want to forget that I'm Russian, Olga, as well as American. Russians are just naturally religious. That's where they differ from Americans. We can never forget that we have a soul and are not afraid to talk about it—in fact we *like* to talk about it. Not so the

American. But in other respects Russians and Americans are very much alike."

Perhaps he was unconsciously showing off his superior knowledge. Perhaps he only wished to share with his future wife the information he had dug out of learned books and the conclusions he had come to on a subject about which he felt very deeply. Whatever the motives for his long discourses on religion, Olga listened adoringly and found her own problems regarding church relationships melting away.

But the problem of reconciling her mother, not only to her marriage but also to her desertion of her church, seemed to Olga impossible of solution. How could she deliberately inflict such suffering on one who had already endured so much, even though she was sure she was right?

Elena Petrovna had fled from Russia during the revolution of 1918, taking her baby with her. All the rest were dead—mother, father, husband and little son. In Paris she found work in a restaurant and saved enough money for the passage to America. Because of her tall, straight figure, her lovely hands, her charm of manner, she was soon displaying on her own graceful person the expensive gowns of an exclusive Fifth Avenue shop. Olga had heard the story many times. She was proud of her lovely mother even though she could not enter into her life, centered as it was in her church and a small circle of Russian friends, exiles like herself. But above and beyond everything else, Elena Petrovna had toiled and saved and denied herself the luxuries she loved, because of Olga—Olga, her beloved child, who must some day have a beautiful wedding in the Russian church and live forever after a life of ease and comfort. And yet, knowing all this, Olga had agreed to leave her mother,

marry Alex at the Episcopal rectory on the twenty-first of April, and settle down to a life on a farm.

She even planned to accompany her mother to church on Good Friday and then, as she had often done before, drive home with Alex for a visit, presumably, to his mother. Alex did not approve of this plan. Olga guessed that he was afraid she would weaken—that this last afternoon with her unsuspecting mother, and the service itself, would be too much for her. But this time the longing to be with her mother once more in the old, unclouded relationship was greater than her desire to please Alexis. Also she needed the sustaining influence of the church to give her courage for the step she was about to take.

On Good Friday morning Olga announced that she was taking the day off. She stood at the front window of the little apartment and watched her mother walk briskly toward the subway. Elena Petrovna had bewailed the fact that she was needed at the shop that morning, but nothing would prevent her from meeting Olga at church in the afternoon.

Olga turned from the window and threw herself down on the living room divan. Her throat ached and she sobbed aloud.

"Oh, poor darling mummy! I'll never wave you off to work again—at least not as Olga Chernoff. Tonight I'll be Olga Marks!"

Then she went to work and cleaned the little apartment thoroughly. It must be all bright and shining for Easter. In the cupboard were the gay Easter eggs they had decorated together a few evenings ago, and the marvelous cake which couldn't be cut until Sunday.

Olga polished the silver and the nickel faucets in the kitchen. She dusted lovingly the sets of Tolstoy and Dostoevski which she

had bought out of her first earnings and presented proudly to her mother. She looked long at the faded photographs of her mother's family in Russia and of herself as a tiny child, the only treasures saved from the holocaust of 1918 except a jewelled icon, which had been given to the church. She packed her old suitcase with all the personal belongings it would hold, then tried to eat some lunch, but the lump in her throat made it difficult to swallow. She should be fasting today, but felt she could not go through the emotional strain ahead of her without physical strength to help sustain her. Anyway, fasting belonged to the old order which she was forsaking. Last of all she wrote the note which would shatter all her mother's high hopes of her daughter's future as the wife of a Russian of the old school.

When Olga entered the church at two o'clock Elena Petrovna was already there, kneeling in her accustomed place under the small jewelled icon which she had given to the church years before—a thank offering for the safe refuge of America. Olga stopped to buy a candle, and, because it was Good Friday, a pot of flowers to place on the tomb of Christ, which was in the center of the church. She knelt beside her mother and tried to fix her mind on the service. The choir was singing the Alleluia. The clergy came forth from the sanctuary, carrying the book of the Gospels, which they placed on the lectern. Then all through the church the tapers were lighted and the people stood, listening to the story of that first Good Friday so many hundred years ago.

Olga's eyes followed the lights, wavering and flickering throughout the church, as the devout worshipers who held them stood and kneeled and stood again. She watched the black-robed priest cense the church and those present and she tried to follow the words he was saying. But so much was happening to her personally it was

difficult to concentrate on what had happened so long ago. When would she kneel again beside her mother in this church to which she belonged by birth and upbringing? Tonight was her wedding night. She should be full of joyful anticipation. But Alex seemed unreal and far away. The only reality was the devout and absorbed figure beside her, upon whom her own daughter was about to inflict a crushing blow. But she didn't have to do this cruel thing. It wasn't too late—yet. Alex? Alex hadn't wanted her to come to church today. He was afraid she might fail him, after all. Oh—she *couldn't* fail Alex. She dropped her face into her hands with a little sob. Elena Petrovna looked at her daughter in surprise. She had never seen her so moved in church before. "Easter is coming, darling," she whispered, "don't be troubled."

The black-robed priest was reading the mournful words of the litany: "All creation was confounded with terror when it beheld Thee suspended on the cross, O Christ. The sun was darkened and the foundations of the earth were shaken: all things suffered in sympathy with Him who had created all things. O Lord, who of thine own good will did'st suffer for us, glory to Thee!"

How terrible the sufferings of Christ, mused Olga, her thoughts turning at last to the words of priest and choir, and to that black-draped tomb surrounded by kneeling figures. His life of love and healing passed before her. His teachings, his days and nights in the hills and on the lake. He loved the out-of-doors. "Consider the lilies," He had said. Why, He could understand her longing to live on the farm, to leave the noisy crowded city, to see the sun rise and set. And to have a home of her own, for had He not participated in a wedding festival? And He loved little children. Though He had died on a cross, tomorrow, in this very place heavy with the odor of funereal flowers and draped in black, there would be glad cries at

midnight, "He is risen—He is risen indeed." "Easter is coming," her mother had said, and that thought suddenly crowded out everything else.

A few weeks ago Olga had attended the Easter service in the Episcopal church near the farm. She had listened to the clear, beautiful voice of Alexis Markovich, who was called Alex Marks, and had seen his eager eyes searching for her face. He was so anxious to have her like his church. And indeed that service had moved her profoundly. Tomorrow night he would sing the Easter songs again for Olga his wife, and for his mother, whose heart would be turning back to Russia and her own church. And she would pray then, as she was praying now, that the healing of the risen Christ would come to Elena Petrovna and forgiveness for the daughter who had hurt her so cruelly.

The priest came again from the sanctuary and read from the liturgy, "Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace."

The black-robed clergy lifted the winding sheet from the altar and walked in slow procession to the center of the church, where they spread the sheet over the tomb. Three times the priest censed the sheet, the church, and the kneeling worshipers. He pronounced the benediction and the people followed him to the tomb and knelt among the flowers with tear-filled eyes.

But Olga's eyes were dry and the lump in her throat was gone. A voice was speaking in her heart:

"Depart in peace, my child, depart in peace."

HE IS RISEN INDEED!



IT WAS only ten o'clock when Elena Petrovna reached the church. It had been a day of sunshine and the warmth of the springtime still lingered in the night air. Overhead the stars were very bright and on the sidewalk in front of the church an old man with a wagon full of flowers was doing a thriving business. Of none of these things which usually brought her much pleasure was Elena Petrovna aware. She had come early because she could no longer endure the loneliness of her little flat. And also because the shock she had received when she read Olga's letter, added to days of fasting, made it impossible for her to stand through the long service. She must find a chair, and there were very few chairs in the Russian church.

She drew off her glove and entered the building, looking anxiously about for a seat on the side opposite from her accustomed place under the jewelled icon. She hoped that none of her friends had arrived, for she wished to be unobserved—lost, perhaps, among the Americans who always attended the Russian Easter service and

who had a few chairs reserved for them. She saw the sign, "Reserved for our American visitors," and hurried toward it. But she could not avoid old General Kolnikoff nor Count Koslovsky, both of whom bowed over her hand and kissed it fervently. She found an empty chair and pushed it as far out of sight as possible. Later she would buy some candles. Now a place where she could rest and decide what to do was her one essential need.

Early as it was, the service had begun. A reader was chanting from the Gospels in a low voice, unheeded by the people walking about the church seeking a more advantageous spot from which to view the service. The familiar words reached Elena Petrovna, but they meant nothing at all. Other words, however, were piercing her very heart—the words from Olga's note, hidden in her handbag, but louder than any other sound in the universe.

Perhaps it was a mistake to have come to church with mind so distraught and heart so torn. But she had struggled all day at home with her problem and gotten nowhere. And she had never missed an Easter service as far back as she could remember. For a moment her mind left Olga and the note in her bag, and went back to the happy Easters of her childhood. Her home, her stately mother and professor father. All the excited preparations for the great day—the house-cleaning from top to bottom; the delicious food, not to be tasted until Easter day, but taken to the church the evening before to be blessed; the wonderful *koulisch*, or Easter cake; the decorated eggs; the long elaborate service at church, the joyous return home; the exchange of calls that afternoon and on Monday and Tuesday, and the special games for the young people.

She looked around this church, in the heart of New York City, and thought how little it resembled the gorgeous cathedral of her childhood. The interior seemed so plain and bare, though the

domed roof and the painted screen with its life-sized saints and apostles were not so different. In the center, the bier of Christ was represented, standing on a low platform. One by one the worshipers stepped up and kissed the icon lying on top of the bier. Elena Petrovna dared not leave her chair, for the crowd in front of her was now so great that she could see nothing at all save the lights and decorations over her head. She shut her eyes and tried to bring her mind back to what she could do about Olga.

Not since those terrible days in Russia when she had fled, with her baby in her arms, to a refuge with friends in Paris had she suffered as she was suffering now. Then the end of the world had come. Her mother and little son dead from exposure, and her father from a broken heart; her husband killed in the war—family, home, money, personal possessions all swept away in that awful holocaust. But Olga saved, Olga her one incentive for living, her one reason for keeping sane in the midst of insanity, her one tie with the past. Olga, her joy and delight through all the years since then. And now Olga had disobeyed her, forsaken her church, wrecked the world for both of them. How *could* she forgive her?

Elena Petrovna shuddered and opened her eyes. She was getting nowhere, and there was no one to help her. She felt old and tired and alone and defeated. She drew off her other glove, for the church was very warm. Her hands were slim and beautiful. She had always been vain of her hands. A lovely girl in a white fur coat stood just in front of her. She could barely see the priest, who came through the Holy Door in his golden robe, swinging his golden censer. But the incense floated over in a misty cloud to their corner. It mingled with another perfume, faint, elusive, a reminder of something precious, but what? The girl in the white coat turned a little. Violets, she was wearing violets! Elena Petrovna shut her eyes again and

the slow tears gathered on her lashes. Her present surroundings were blotted out and she was back in Paris in the Russian church on the Rue Daru and a pathetic little girl was offering her a bunch of violets.

Years ago it was, but as vivid as though it had happened yesterday. She had been working in that awful restaurant in Montmartre, saving every *sou* for the time when she could take her baby and go to America. Her goal was reached at last and then her purse with all its precious contents was stolen from her room. It was the Saturday before Easter and in the evening she sat in church, even as she was sitting now, faint from her fast, bowed down with grief, searching for guidance as to what she should do next. The music of the great Russian choir poured a flood of melody over the crowd that filled the church, refugees like herself, hiding their poverty in the rich garments of a gay and carefree past. Into the midst of so much splendor a forlorn child slipped through the worshiping throng and knelt at the side of Elena Petrovna. She recognized her as the girl who sold flowers on the steps of the church. The child turned toward her, a look of mystic devotion in her glowing eyes, and slipped a bunch of violets into her hand.

"They are beautiful, like you, Madam," she whispered. "Do not sorrow any more. Christ has risen!"

And then Elena Petrovna had answered with all her heart, "He has risen indeed!" and had gone back to the restaurant and two more years of hard work.

And here she was, listening to the Easter service in a Russian church in America, and the perfume of violets on a white fur coat had brought back that other springtime so long ago. How did Paris look now? she wondered. She could see the flower-beds in the Tuileries Gardens, a long riotous carpet of color, the children roll-

ing their hoops along the gravelled paths and sailing their miniature yachts across the round pools; young people playing battledore and shuttlecock, cheered on by interested spectators; in front of the refreshment kiosks old men sipping absinthe and basking in the sunshine; up and down the grassy strips on the Champs Elysées, smart nursery maids, with long streamers on their caps, would be airing their daintily clad little charges. Along the Seine the shabby booksellers would be straightening up their stalls, and the artists in the Latin Quarter would be putting finishing touches to "masterpieces" for this year's Salon. What time would it be in Paris? She could not remember. But anyway, the Russian church would be celebrating Easter and the flower sellers would stand on the steps and another little girl would offer violets. How she loved Paris!

But she loved New York also. America had been good to her, and to her child. The years had been full of blessings. Hard work, yes. But always there had been Olga, sweet, grave, earnest Olga. And now that same Olga by one wilful act had blotted out their happy times together in the past, had spoiled the present, and had shattered all the dreams of a future together. To live on a farm, with peasant folk—it was unthinkable! And she had chosen Good Friday for her wedding day! What Russian had ever before so outraged the traditions of the church! How could she ever forgive Olga for adding *this* tragedy to all the other tragedies of her mother's life?

In spite of her efforts at self-control a little sob escaped her. The girl in the fur coat turned and looked at her sympathetically. "Don't be troubled," she whispered softly. Elena Petrovna was startled. Even so had she whispered to Olga on Good Friday as they knelt together under the jewelled icon which she had given to the church as a thank offering. Only yesterday! And she had lived years since

then. But Olga too had suffered. She had had to choose between her mother and her lover. And she had chosen her lover. But of course, thought Elena Petrovna, a sudden flood of understanding releasing the long tension. Of course she chose Alexis—she loves him—he is a good boy—he will make her happy. Always Olga had wanted to be out of doors with the growing things. I wouldn't let her go to the agricultural college. I shut her up in an office. I wanted to plan her life. I have been utterly selfish! "O God, forgive me and help me now," she prayed. Again the fragrance of violets. Long ago, at an Easter service, she had won a victory over despair. So now might she not win a victory over selfishness and frustration?

Elena Petrovna shrank back farther into the corner and opened her purse. She took the little crumpled note and smoothed it out with trembling fingers.

Dear Mother [she read], I know this is going to make you feel very badly, but Alex and I are to be married tonight. We knew you would say *no* if we asked you, or even if you consented you would want a big wedding, Russian style. This we cannot afford and do not believe in and so we shall go to the Episcopal rector. Please do not blame Alex. It was I who made the final decision and I quite forgot that it is Good Friday. Our little house on the farm is almost finished and there is a room just for you, where we can take care of you. Connecticut is not far from New York, so you can go often to the city. Please get over the hurt and send word right away that we are forgiven.

Devotedly,
Olga

P.S. It is not Good Friday in the Episcopal church. If you do forgive us we will come and spend Sunday with you and help eat the Easter cake.

Why, the letter isn't terrible at all, thought Elena Petrovna, putting it back in her bag. And suddenly she smiled. Does the dear

child actually think that her mother, at fifty, is ready to give up her independence and retire to a farm and be taken care of by her children? But really it wouldn't be so bad for week-ends. A picture of the future opened out before her, not as she had planned it, but so much better than her plans. I can keep on working for a long time, and visits in the country with the children will be something to look forward to every day. And when I'm old (she smiled again, it seemed so absurd) I'll settle down in the room they've built for me. A room away from city streets and city noise, close to the soil with growing things all about, flowers, violets, oh, *lots* of violets! Elena Petrovna drew in her breath with a little sobbing gasp. She could hardly wait until she could leave the church and send a message to Olga and Alexis.

It was nearing midnight and an atmosphere of excitement ran through the crowd, packed so close it was impossible to move. The lights, the incense, the chanting of the choir all added to the tenseness of the feeling.

Elena Petrovna stood on tiptoe and tried to see the High Altar, toward which all eyes were turned expectantly. Suddenly the Holy Door behind it opened and the gorgeously arrayed priest came out carrying triple candlesticks and a cross. He censed the altar, then with the clergy and deacons carrying banners and lights, he led the way through the crowd and out into the street. As they walked they sang a chant of joy:

"The angels in Heaven, O Christ our Saviour, sing thy resurrection."

The choir took up the chant. "And do Thou enable us on earth to glorify Thee with a pure heart." As many as could push through the

door followed the procession to the street and then back into the church again.

Elena Petrovna was too far from the entrance to join the throng outside, who held their candles aloft, searching for the empty tomb. As they re-entered she felt suddenly weak from lack of food and the strain she had been under. I must not faint, she thought, clutching the back of the chair for support. The lights had been dimmed and there was absolute silence in the church. The worshipers stood with bowed heads, waiting for the moment when the candles which they held would be lighted, each one from its neighbor.

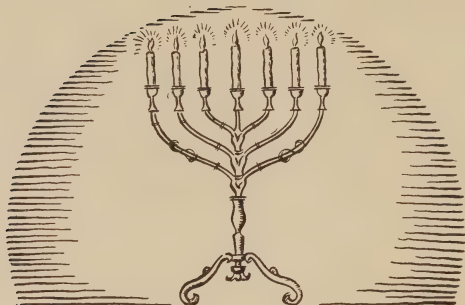
It seemed to Elena Petrovna that all those whom she had left behind in Russia were there in the church with her, waiting for the moment of resurrection. How often they had gone together to search for the Christ, circling the church three times, each futile effort emphasizing the fact that He was not there. Even so had the faithful women searched for Him on that first Easter morning. Here in the streets of a great city, with curious onlookers hanging out of every window, it was difficult to carry out the ancient ceremony.

Suddenly, on the altar and overhead, the lights blazed out. Then from one candle to the next, held in hot moist hands, the little lights ran through the great throng. The girl in the white fur coat turned toward Elena Petrovna and held out her lighted candle. "Christ is risen," she said. The priest cried out in a loud voice: "O Death, where is thy sting, O Hell, where is thy victory? Christ is risen and thou art overthrown. Christ is risen and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen and life reigneth. Christ being risen from the dead is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be glory and dominion unto ages."

How can one who has sinned and been forgiven carry an unforgiving spirit toward another? thought Elena Petrovna. Least of all I, toward darling Olga? She shielded her flickering candle with one slender hand. The girl leaned toward her and kissed her, and again she said, "Christ is risen!"

The perfume of violets, mingled with incense, swept over Elena Petrovna. Her candle shone out bravely, but it was the light from within that illumined her face. The answer came sure and jubilant—"He is risen indeed!"

A NEW SONG



SOMETIMES in the night Miriam would wake up screaming. And then the sobs would come, choking, heart-breaking sobs that brought no relief, but only intensified the memory of what she was trying so hard to forget.

She was thankful that her room was so far away from Mr. and Mrs. Green and the children. Down there in that little room off the kitchen she could cry out loud and no one could hear her. And she knew that in the morning she would be her usual self—outwardly calm and composed.

She had thought the quiet country would restore her shattered nerves; that was one reason why she had accepted the position when Mrs. Green had offered it to her that day in Mr. Meyer's office.

It was Mr. Meyer who had made it possible for her to come to America. He had welcomed her to his home, but of course she had sought at once for some means of self-support. *Not* music—

she was sure she would never be able to sing again.

And then Mr. Meyer had suggested the Greens. "There is a young man in my firm who is looking for someone to stay in the country this winter with his wife and children. Not as a servant, you understand. But as a companion—yet willing to help with the work. Of course, they are Christians, but you will like them."

It had seemed the perfect solution of her immediate problem: self-support, the peacefulness and serenity of life in the country, a hiding place from Nazi spies, an opportunity to learn American ways.

It was all right in the daytime. The Greens were very kind to her. They asked no questions, made no unreasonable requests. The children were darling. And for the first time in many years she could have all she wanted to eat. Mrs. Green had explained that they were living in the country this winter in order to economize. But Miriam could not remember when she had seen such an abundance of food—butter, eggs, cream—and all she wanted!

She would go to bed thoroughly tired from the unaccustomed work and then would waken suddenly, sobbing, protesting against the destruction of her home. A terrible flood of remembrance would sweep over her—furniture, rugs, lamps, dishes being thrown out of the windows by frenzied boys, some of them neighbors whom she had known from babyhood!

All the precious belongings acquired over the years, destroyed in one short hour. And why? Because she and her father belonged to a hated race, hunted and persecuted through the ages and yet more German than the Germans who were driving them out of their homeland, beggared and penniless.

Her father—a man of God if there ever was one. As far back as she could remember she could see him bowed over his books—his

beloved copy of the Torah and the worn volumes of the Talmud. Everything that was necessary for the well-being of man was in those sacred books, he had taught her, his only child. And because he had tried to save those holy books from the fanatics who were destroying his home, had wrapped them in his prayer shawl and refused to surrender them, they had been snatched away from him, torn to pieces before his very eyes, and he himself had been hurried to a concentration camp. There he had died—her father—a feeble, harmless, devout old man. He had believed so firmly that God would deliver his chosen people from the present trials that were overwhelming them. Hate, suffering, persecution had been their lot through the centuries. What else had they known from their Christian oppressors back in those dark ages? But these were days of enlightenment and civilization. And some day the great Deliverer, the Messiah, would come to save his people, perhaps even now he was coming.

Even when his daughter was no longer permitted to use her music as a source of livelihood, he had been hopeful and reassuring. If they must leave the country of their birth, there was Palestine waiting for them—Palestine, the answer to the yearning of so many homesick Jewish hearts. In the meantime they would not forget the great promises from the Prophet Isaiah, "Fear thou not for I am with thee; be not dismayed for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." And, "Fear thou not for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee. When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

After a while the nightly terror came less frequently to Miriam.

But the image of her father never left her, though the heart-breaking memories finally became a dull pain that was there under the surface no matter what she might be doing.

Mr. Green offered to take her to the city whenever she would like to go. He drove in and out every day and the Meyers would be glad to have her come to their home, or attend the synagogue with them.

But Miriam was afraid of the city. She was gripped by an unreasoning fear that the terrible secret arm of Nazi Germany would reach even here, that she would be recognized as her father's daughter and sent back to suffer as he had suffered. And the synagogue was the place where their enemies would look for her. She could not explain all this to the Greens—even though it was becoming easier for her to talk to them.

One evening in December, after the children had gone to bed, the three of them were sitting in front of a glowing fire of white birch logs. The only other light in the room came from two candles, standing tall and straight in old silver candlesticks. Mr. Green drew a paper from his pocket and handed it to Miriam. "It is the Hannukah Hymn—Mr. Meyer gave it to me. He said you would sing it for us."

"Oh," she said, "I have never seen the English words. I know only the Hebrew."

"Then sing it in Hebrew, *please*," Mrs. Green begged. "And tell us about Hannukah—it is coming soon, isn't it?"

"Yes"—she hesitated, her eyes on the two tall candles in their silver holders. Then: "It is our 'Feast of Lights,' to commemorate the victory of Judas Maccabeus over Antiochus Epiphanes——"

"Way back in that inter-Testament period?" Mr. Green interrupted.

"Way back in 165—B.C. *you* would say," she replied. "When the Jews got back the Temple and tried to light the great lamp, the perpetual lamp, they found only one cruse of oil, enough for one day, that had not been polluted. But by a miracle it lasted eight days, until fresh oil was ready. And so for eight days we celebrate and light our candles. One on the first evening and then another one each evening until eight are lighted. This the children do. When I was a little girl always I lighted the Hannukah candles and on the windowsill I placed the Hannukah lamp. This was to show that freedom and spiritual light had come to the Jews, so all the world outside could see."

"And Christians put a lighted candle in the window at Christmas time." Mrs. Green took the candles from the table and put one on each windowsill. Then she drew her chair close to Miriam's. "Won't you sing for us?" she asked gently.

"I will try," Miriam said. Then she added slowly, "I sang it always with my father. There were just the two of us. My mother was dead." She stood up, and suddenly the lovely low voice began to chant the old Hebrew words. Gradually it rose and filled the quiet candle-lit room with plaintive, heart-breaking melody.

*Rock of Ages, let our song
Praise thy saving power;
Thou, amidst the raging foes,
Wast our shelt'ring tower,
Furious, they assailed us,
But thine arm availed us,
And thy word
Broke their sword
When our own strength failed us.*

*Kindling new the holy lamps,
Priests approved in suffering
Purified the nation's shrine,
Brought to God their offering.
And his courts surrounding
Hear in joy abounding
Happy throngs,
Singing songs
With a mighty sounding.*

*Children of the Martyr-race,
Whether free or fettered,
Wake the echoes of the songs
Where ye may be scattered.
Yours the message cheering
That the time is nearing
Which will see
All men free,
Tyrants disappearing.*

She sang through to the end. Then slipped out of the room, choking back the sobs that surged up in her throat.

"Oh—we shouldn't have asked her!" Mrs. Green looked reproachfully at her husband.

"Mr. Meyer told me to ask her. He thinks she needs to sing. He asks me about her every day. Shall we read a Psalm and then go to bed?" He opened his Bible and began to read:

*By the rivers of Babylon
There we sat down, yea we wept
When we remembered Zion.*

*Upon the willows in the midst thereof
We hanged up our harps.
For there they that led us captive
Required of us songs,
And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying,
Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
How shall we sing Jehovah's song
In a foreign land?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her skill
And my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
If I remember thee not;
If I prefer not Jerusalem
Above my chief joy.*

II

And then, suddenly, the long cold winter was over. Miriam, city born and bred, had never witnessed the coming of spring, and she was hardly aware of it now, advancing so quietly and cautiously. But the warm sun, which thawed the snow and changed the face of the countryside, began to work miracles in the frozen heart that was trying so hard to forget the past. She became conscious of her unresponsiveness to the kindness and affection which surrounded her. How engrossed she had been in her own desolation! The Greens had been having a hard time too, but their troubles had seemed so insignificant compared to hers. How selfish she had been! But now there was gladness all about her. The pussywillows were out, the crocuses showed their bright heads through the faint greenness that was spreading over the lawn. Bird songs came from the

bare branches of the trees. The children ran about in the yard or knelt beside their mother in the garden, pushing back the dead leaves from the flower beds and sniffing the leafy mold like young rabbits.

Strange, forgotten emotions surged through Miriam's heart. Joy? No that was impossible. Contentment, perhaps. And suddenly she *wanted* to sing.

"Only two weeks till Easter," Mrs. Green said, "and next Monday your Jewish Passover begins. Wouldn't you like to go into the city with us that evening, Miriam? We are driving in to have dinner with friends?"

"Oh, no, thank you." The old fear came back into Miriam's eyes. Then she added, "The children need me here with them. I would have to stay all night, you know. We do not ride on the night of the Passover."

"I can arrange to have someone else stay with the children till our return. Mr. Meyer wants you to go home to his house, after the synagogue service. It would be too bad to refuse him after all his kindness to you."

"But I have no suitable dress—everyone will wear evening clothes."

"No, Miriam, you are mistaken. Perhaps on Tuesday night, though I am surprised to know that evening dress is worn at a religious festival. But on Monday night the guests will all be refugees like yourself. Mr. Meyer told my husband to tell you."

"I cannot go. I am sorry. Last year we were together, father and I—and all the years of my life. I could not stand it."

But she did go after all, drawn by some irresistible force that she could not explain. She sat in the gallery of the synagogue with the other women, and listened to the familiar Bible readings and pray-

ers, and forgot for a little while that she was a stranger and a wanderer like her fathers before her.

In the Meyers' beautiful home her welcome was warm and sincere and she sat at the long table, with other pathetic, courageous men and women, and lived over with them the deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt more than three thousand years before.

The long, impressive ritual gripped her heart as never before. Mr. Meyer in his white skull-cap, at the far end of the table, might have been her own father, and the child beside him her own small self asking the familiar questions:

"Wherefore is this night distinguished from all other nights? On all other nights we may eat leavened or unleavened bread, but on this night we eat only unleavened bread; on all other nights we may eat any species of herbs, but on this night only bitter herbs; on all other nights we do not dip bitter herbs even once, but on this night we dip twice; on all other nights we eat and drink sitting, but on this night we all lean."

And the answer:

"Slaves were we unto Pharaoh in the land of Egypt. And the Eternal our God brought us forth from thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. And if the Holy One, blessed be He! had not brought forth our ancestors from Egypt, we and our children and our children's children had still continued in bondage to the Pharaohs in Egypt."

The long story of the Exodus, chanted in Hebrew by the men at the table, was interrupted by the various ceremonials of the ritual—the pouring of water over the hands of the host, the filling of the wine goblets four times, the dipping of the bitter herbs, the eating of matzos—each act commemorating what took place at the first

Passover feast. Before the end of the ritual the evening meal of special Passover food was served.

For Miriam the familiar words began to take on a new meaning. "He brought us from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to festive gladness, from darkness to great light and from servitude to redemption. Therefore let us chant to him a new song."

Freedom! More than three thousand years ago God had given freedom to his chosen people. And through all the long centuries they had remembered and rejoiced each year in this festival of freedom. Now, here in America, was freedom for all the Jewish people praising God tonight in countless synagogues and homes. Freedom for herself, and a chance to build life anew.

A new song, she thought. That is what I need to sing—a new song—of gratitude and of dedication to the service of others.

The sense of her father's nearness grew as the evening went on. And now the thought of him brought no pain; only a blessed peace. He had come back to stay with her always, the same beloved companion who had been the inspiration of her entire life. Words he had often quoted came to her mind.

*I waited patiently for Jehovah
And He inclined unto me and heard my cry.
He brought me up also out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay:
And He set my feet upon a rock and established my going.
And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise
unto our God.*

The realization of the greatness of her inheritance swept over her. No longer would she try to hide it. She would try to use her heritage for the blessing of this new country, which had given pro-

tection and freedom to all these sitting about the Passover table tonight. But she was a penniless refugee—what had she to give? Her voice—yes, for the comforting of other lonely, homesick hearts. And her willing hands and feet for the helping of little children.

At home in the country the next night she tried to tell Mrs. Green something of what the evening had meant to her. They sat together on the porch after the children were in bed, stars shining overhead, the mysterious noises of the night all about them. At Mrs. Green's request she explained the Passover service.

"It is called also the Feast of Unleavened Bread, you know, and there must be no trace of leaven in the house during the entire eight days. We call the celebration in the home *Seder*, and the children have a part, so that they will never forget how their ancestors were freed from slavery. And so we have on the table the *matzos* (the unleavened bread), the lamb bone, because of the lamb slain in Egypt on the night before the departure, the bitter herbs, to remind of the bondage, the *Haroseth*, symbol of bondage—it looks like bricks and mortar, but is really good to eat. The master of the house has pillows all about him, because free men reclined at table but not slaves, and wine is taken four times during the ceremony. The men chant in Hebrew the Exodus story, psalms, hymns, prayers.

"For the regular meal there is soup with matzos balls, fish balls and horseradish, chicken, stewed fruit and other things. At the end a long grace. We always have grace at the beginning and end of the meal, you know. How I wish you had been there tonight—and Mr. Green too."

"How I wish we had! Mr. Meyer invited us. But we thought we should feel uncomfortable at being the only Christians there."



"Oh, but you wouldn't! And everyone would have been so glad to have you."

It was after midnight when they went inside. Through the open windows came the fragrance of blossoming fruit trees. No one felt like going to bed, and without being asked Miriam sat down at the piano and began to sing softly in Hebrew.

"It is my new song of praise to God," she explained; "an old song, but new for me, because I am new. And I know the words in English. Listen!"

"Wherefore the beloved praised and extolled God. Yea, the beloved offered hymns, songs, praises, blessings and thanksgivings to the King and God who liveth and endureth, who is high and exalted, great and awful. Who bringeth low the haughty and raiseth up the lowly, leadeth forth the prisoners, delivereth the meek, helpeth the poor and answereth his people when they cry unto him."

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